

20p

THE INDEPENDENT

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INSIDE TODAY

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Revelation that led Tavener to the abbey



21/JOHN WALSH

Wet nuns and unionists

THE EYE

Art, hype and fame: Tom Lubbock on the new RA show

TODAY'S NEWS

Unionists join talks

The Northern Ireland peace talks strode an important few paces forward yesterday, when the Ulster Unionist leader David Trimble led his colleagues into Stormont. Despite this week's bomb, the Unionists are expected to meet Sinn Féin face to face next week, after being caught in a political pincer movement between the Blair government and their own grassroots supporters. Mr Trimble, however, is far from reconciled to his old enemies. As he walked into the building where the talks will take place, he explained that he was not there to negotiate with Sinn Féin but to expose "their fascist character". David McKittrick, page 13

Landmine ban agreed

More than 100 countries including Britain yesterday agreed a draft treaty to ban anti-personnel landmines immediately. But the United States, having tried to delay the ban for another nine years and failed, refused to sign. There was some discussion about naming the treaty after Diana, Princess of Wales. Full story, page 10

Children betrayed

The London borough of Hackney has broken the law by failing to protect the safety and well-being of children in some of its 69 schools, according to the Office for Standards in Education. It will release a scathing report today which portrays Hackney as a drifting and leaderless education authority which has virtually collapsed. Page 7

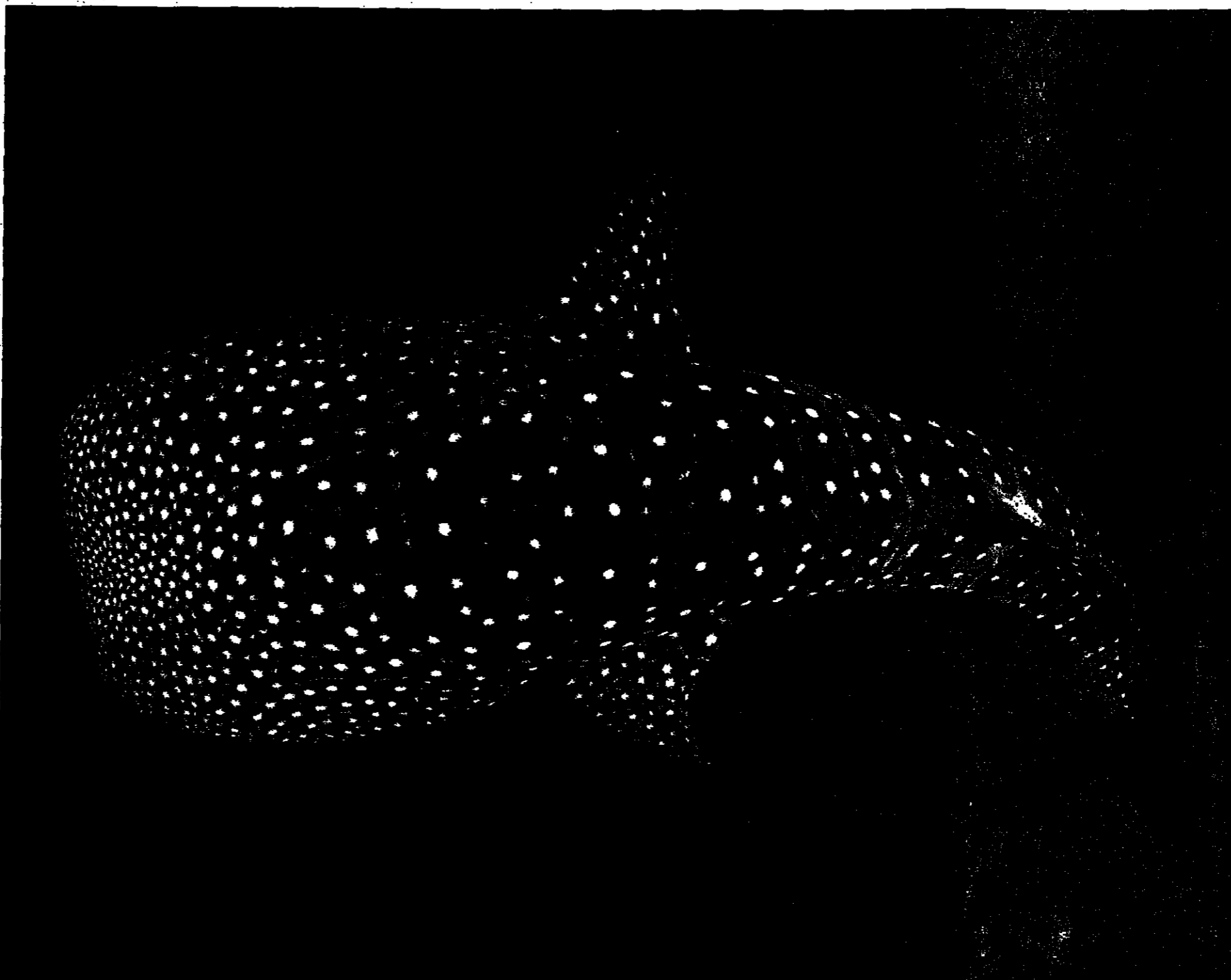
Taxmen in trouble

Taxpayers have suffered badly from rude and incompetent government officials, according to a withering report on the Inland Revenue and other agencies. In one case a businessman was hounded into bankruptcy unnecessarily. In another, a woman returned from holiday to find her after-tax pay had been reduced by two-thirds. Page 9

SEEN & HEARD

A pensioner silenced the bells of her village church by smashing down the door and cutting through the bell ropes, a court heard yesterday. Midge Mather, 65, had been locked in a bitter ding-dong with church leaders over the noise of bell-ringing in the 12th-century church tower beside her cottage at Compton Bassett, Wiltshire. So she armed herself with a crowbar and a hacksaw before breaking down the 500-year-old oak church door and sawing through the bell ropes. She then telephoned church officials and was later charged with causing criminal damage worth £1,852.25. The prosecutor, a Mr. Knell, told Chippenham magistrates' court that it was "a sad case for the church authorities... They are people who are normally used to dealing in terms of peace and understanding".

Big Blue: A fish-eye view of the whale shark



Out of the blue: A whale shark photograph, taken exclusively for the Independent, was taken with a Nikon F4 with 16mm fisheye lens, 1/60 sec at f8. Freund said: "After the annual mass spawning of 120 million land crabs at Christmas Island in the Indian Ocean, whale crabs gather to feed on a banquet of larvae. At other places in the world, people often have to search for whale sharks, but at Christmas Island, the sharks found us." An exhibition of 150 winning photographs from the competition will open at the Natural History Museum on 25 October.

Open war at the BBC as stars revolt

Some of the country's best-known journalists were in open revolt yesterday over a plan by the BBC director-general John Birt, to replace news programmes and cut jobs.

Paul McGonn and Paul Valley explain why the plan to replace programme editors with five "super editors" might be a reform too far.

The BBC was in crisis last night as its senior broadcasters stood nose to nose with John Birt to oppose his plans to merge the production of the Corporation's news programmes.

Anna Ford, John Humphries, James Naughtie, Sue MacGregor, Nick Clarke, Robin Lustig and James Cox circulated a letter of protest about the changes yesterday after being involved in an extraordinary stand-up row in a packed meeting with the head of BBC news programmes, Richard Clegg.

The letter expresses the broadcasters' "dismay, verging on despair" at the plans and ends: "The changes you have put forward will not work. This is the simple truth."

Barton, editor of the *Today* programme, and Kevin Marsh, the editor of *The World at One* and *PM*, have all put their jobs on the line by refusing to apply for any of the five new executive-editor posts planned under the new regime.

Production staff on a number of programmes were discussing mass resignations with the intention of transferring as a unit to other networks.

Senior sources believe BBC management has underestimated the strength of feeling. Despite years of restructuring at the corporation this is being seen as a reform too far.

Sources said they hoped the heat of the reaction yesterday would encourage management to compromise.

"Editors are very senior people in the BBC," said one highly-placed broadcaster. "They include some of the most calm, sensible and level-headed individuals, but today they are distressed and deeply passionate."

"Birt is determined to replace a BBC of programmes with a BBC of networks," said another. "He is bent on destroying the essence of what has made the BBC great."

"He will obliterate what gives programmes character and individual integrity and replace it with a bland homogenised service of 24-hour news."

The five executive editors will take responsibility for all the BBC's news. These include one who will control the *One O'Clock*, *Six O'Clock* and *Nine*



Anna Ford: Dismay at changes to BBC news

O'Clock News along with the main news bulletins of *Radios 4* and *5*. Another will look after *Today*, *The World at One*, *PM* on *Radio 4* as well as *Radio 1*'s populist *Newsbeat*. "Also planned is an editor for 24-hour 'core news' services; separate TV and radio daily current affairs; and daily current affairs planning and commissioning."

A National Union of Journalists meeting was held last night at Broadcasting House and a further meeting is planned for this morning so journalists can organise opposition to the plan.

Pressure mounted on the director-general to compromise when Baroness Williams, the former minister, accused him last night of rushing the changes through to escape the censure of Parliament while it is in recess.

Yesterday morning, a heated meeting took place in the Broadcasting House newsroom

when Mr Clegg, met staff to announce the changes.

Up to 80 reporters, producers and senior editors from radio news gave short shrift to his insistence that the cost-cutting changes were vital if the BBC was to continue to offer distinctive journalism to meet the explosion of broadcast choice from digital TV.

Fuel was added to the row when Mr Clegg told staff that Mr Birt had requested job cuts of 15 per cent from every news department and Tony Hall, the head of BBC News, offered instead to cut 30 per cent of his staff.

"People were very angry," said one of Radio 4's most senior journalists. "In all my years at the BBC I have never seen anything like it. The journalists made mince-meat of Clegg and his deputy, Steve Mitchell. By the end of the meeting their entrails were all over the floor."

Television staff heard details of the plan at an afternoon meeting and sources described it as "heated" and "emotional".

Staff are also angry at plans to transfer up to 75 per cent of each news programme's commissioning budget to a new centralised editor.

"This is tractor tyre manufacture in the Soviet Union circa 1934," said one source yesterday. "We are not saying we cannot share resources or cannot have change, but this is classic bloody Britain. It is a deliberate management policy of getting rid of the identity of the programmes."

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WEATHER
The Eye, page 21
TELEVISION
The Eye, pages 11 and 12
CROSSWORDS
Page 32 and The Eye, page 9

Flood, famine and higher food prices follow El Nino

El Nino, a vast disturbance in the normal workings of the climate system which happens every few years, is well underway again – and this one is going to be extra large. It will cause drought and floods, and raise prices for commodities like tea and coffee. Nicholas Schoon analyses the global effects.

It all started last March, several months earlier than normal, with a rapid rise in sea surface temperatures in the mid and eastern Pacific. It changes the weather, abruptly and catastrophically, bringing drought to some regions and torrential downpours to others thousands of miles away.

Climatologists are already confident this will rank as at least the second worst El Nino this century, if not the worst. The current record holder, which happened from 1982 to 1983, is estimated to have killed 2,000 people and caused more than £5bn worth of damage.

"This one is well underway and it's proving to be a very large event," said Mike Davey, the El Nino expert at the Meteorological Office's Hadley Centre for Climate Prediction in Bracknell, Berkshire.

Taking no chances, the South African Cabinet decided yesterday to start preparing. A special committee for disaster management was set up, and an urgent meeting of African ministers convened. Ministers said a severe drought was expected from November to March 1998.

In a world where the key natural resources of freshwater, fertile soil and forests are squeezed by a rising human population, drastic departures from normal weather patterns become more damaging. Yet some scientists believe that global warming, caused by



ORIGINS

El Nino starts off with a rise in sea surface temperatures and a dividing away of trade winds in the central and eastern Pacific. Temperatures rise at a time of year when they would normally be falling. The colours show the situation at the beginning of this month. The darkest shade is where the sea temperature is 5 degrees C or more above the average for the time of year. The lightest shade is where temperature is 0.5 degrees or more above average. The darker the shade, the more the departure from normal.

EFFECTS NOW

The drastic change in Pacific sea temperatures is followed by drought and flood across much of the world. Already the central and eastern Pacific are receiving heavy rainfall, while drought has arrived or been prolonged on the other side of the ocean.

FUTURE EFFECTS

Over the next few months, El Nino is expected to make itself felt around the world.

DROUGHT FORECAST—Indonesia, Philippines, eastern Australia, South Africa, Central America, Caribbean.

HEAVY RAINFALL FORECAST—Central Chile, north-eastern Argentina and southern Brazil, Uruguay, southern United States and California.

CONSEQUENCES

● Serious brushwood, peat and forest fires in Indonesia and Malaysia

● Famine in Papua New Guinea.

● Possible decline in coffee, tea and cocoa harvests, with prices rising.

● Maize harvest in South Africa and wheat harvest in Australia, a major exporter, may be damaged.

● THE GOOD NEWS – hurricanes in the north Atlantic are reduced in strength and number in El Nino years.

mankind changing the make-up of the atmosphere, may itself be exacerbating the natural climate oscillation of El Nino which has been going on for thousands of years, increasing its threat.

In the last few years, El Nino has moved out from the lecture halls and laboratories of climate science and academia into the wider world.

The phenomenon lasts from two to five years and begins

roughly every five years. Normally, in the absence of El Nino, the trade winds blowing across the Pacific from east to west "bunch up" warm, surface waters on the western side of the Pacific. The sea level there is several feet higher than on the east, and the sea temperatures are also higher. Along the South American coast, cold waters well up from deep ocean trenches, helping to maintain

this temperature difference across 9,000 miles of ocean.

El Nino erases this difference. When it starts, usually around June, the trade winds slacken and the sea surface temperatures in the central and eastern Pacific begin to rise. What begins this process is not known (and its onset cannot yet be accurately predicted) but it is a positive feedback – the rising sea temperatures

tend to weaken the trade winds, which in turn raises the temperatures further.

Scientists using satellites and sensor buoys spot the phenomenon as a fast growing area of surface water where the temperature is several degrees warmer than it should be for the time of year. This temperature "anomaly" grows in area and depth, soon covering sea the size of a continent. By Christ-

mas it is pressed up against hundreds of miles of Ecuador and Peru; people there named it "the boy child" after Jesus. The ocean upwelling slows down, the surface water is as much as eight degrees warmer than normal, and the fishing is severely disrupted.

Onshore there is extremely heavy rainfall. The effects swiftly spread to other continents as the atmosphere and winds re-

spond to the change in sea temperatures. On the other side of the Pacific, drought has already hit large areas of South East Asia and Australia – and El Nino is being blamed. Dr Davey said its impact on weather was heaviest around the Pacific rim, but it could be seen in Africa and as far north as Alaska. One of the few places where no climatologist can confidently claim El Nino is at

work, at least as yet, is Europe. In Australia, a government-backed forecasting organisation is predicting that the country's next wheat harvest could be slashed by one sixth because of the resulting drought. And in South Africa, Agriculture Minister Derek Hanekom said last week that the expected onset of El Nino-related drought could halve the country's corn crop, costing more than 1 billion rand (£130m) in lost exports.

David Lubin, economic adviser for emerging markets at banking group HSBC in London, said: "No one is able to identify the global effects but the basic picture is that prices will go up, incomes will go down and trade balances will be hit." There are worries about how El Nino will affect cocoa, coffee and tea harvests. At the world's biggest futures exchange, the Chicago Board of Trade, some traders have already noticed abnormally large price hedging.

El Nino will be threatening southern hemisphere maize and wheat harvests just after world grain reserves have begun to recover from a couple of lean years which have sent international prices soaring.

In Indonesia, fires used to clear brushwood from plantation sites have gone out of control due to the dry conditions, and El Nino is blamed again. A pall of smoke and haze has covered Singapore and swathes of Malaysia as well as much of Indonesia, threatening the health of millions of people and closing airports. In Papua New Guinea, villagers are leaving their homes in the highlands and traditionally prized pigs are being sold to buy food as a drought continues.

In the country closest to the phenomenon, Peru, the Central Bank forecast a slowdown in economic growth to 5 per cent next year from 6 per cent in 1997 because of likely flooding along the northern coast, droughts in the southern highlands and reduced fish catches.

Weather, The Eye, page 26

Risk of the great deluge abates

Weather experts and environmental agencies had been bracing themselves for severe flooding from tides affected by the movements of the Moon, and the Sun. But as Jojo Moyes found, low winds mean that homeowners on the coast can breathe easy.

An extraordinary combination of astronomical events which threatened to cause major flooding along Britain's coasts this week look set to pass without wreaking destruction. From today until Saturday, the effects of the Sun, Moon

and the Earth's rotation will join to produce the highest "astronomic tides" seen in Britain for 40 years. Combined with high winds, these were predicted to cause "surges" leading to unusually high tides and extensive flooding.

The unusual conditions will peak this morning and any high winds during could produce tides as much as 3 metres above normal levels. The Environment Agency has issued a warning and asked people to be aware of the flood warning service. The Thames Barrier was raised earlier this week for checks in preparation for high tides tonight and tomorrow.

But forecasters are now predicting that the weather over the next few days will be kind, meaning that tides should not reach flood level. "Over the

next four days we've got a nice, big, fat high-pressure system over the British Isles which will produce light winds, so there won't be anything that the sea defences cannot cope with," said PA WeatherCentre forecaster Philip Eden.

The tide levels and weather forecasts are entered into a computer system made by the Proudman Oceanographic Laboratory (POL), which then predicts conditions 36 hours ahead. A spokeswoman said that latest predictions "were certainly not showing anything desperate yet".

Peter Borrow, flood defence manager at the Environment Agency, said: "These very high astronomical tides in themselves don't present a threat. It is only if on top of these tides we get a surge be-

cause of adverse weather conditions that we start to worry."

A spokeswoman for the agency said earlier that only the lowest-level "yellow" precautionary flood warning had gone out in the South-west of England for today, with other parts of the country confident they would escape flooding.

This week is unusual because several different astronomical cycles which rule the tides all peak. Dave Smith, head of the Storm Tide Warning Service at the Met Office, said: "The astronomic tides are going to be near to their highest value in certain locations around the UK."

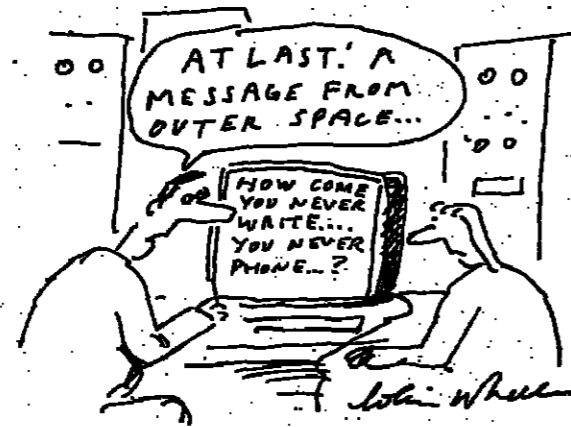
"Every year at around this time, during the equinoxes when the Moon is closest to the Earth, you have this big variation in the cycle."

Forget the primordial soup: according to the latest theory, we are all descended from ET

Life on Earth may have been seeded by comets and meteorites, according to new research. Charles Arthur, Science Editor, says that means we're all extra-terrestrials – and that life has existed longer than the solar system's five billion years.

Chemistry students studying the structure of compounds soon learn that many structures can have a "left-handed" and a "right-handed" formation. The molecules are composed of the same elements, linked in the same order, but their physical structures are mirror images – like gloves. Amino acids, the small molecules which make up proteins, can also show this "handedness".

Now, scientists at the University of Oklahoma and the University of Virginia have



analysed the amino acids in the "Murchison meteorite", and found that the amino acids inside it are mainly left-handed. And it is probably no coincidence that amino acids in living things on Earth are the "left-handed" form.

Increasingly, scientists reckon that the early life on Earth did not start in a "primordial soup" powered by lightning bolts, but instead was seeded by chemicals from comet dust and

meteor impacts. That idea has been boosted by discoveries of complex molecules in the tails and icy cores of comets.

The news vindicates the scientists Fred Hoyle and Chandra Wickramasinghe, who have maintained that life could and did originate in cometary material, which then brought it to Earth. Their views were frequently dismissed. But recently more scientists have come around to agree with them.

Early theories suggested that life on Earth formed in a "primordial soup". Chance would suggest that it would have had equal amounts of left- and right-handed amino acids, and hence proteins. But it does not. Living proteins are built on left-handed amino acids.

The Murchison meteorite, which struck Earth in 1969, also has a surplus of left-handed amino acids. Critics have repeatedly suggested that that was because the meteorite was contaminated by terrestrial sources. But the latest studies, reported today in the science journal *Nature*, have shown that this is not the case: amino acids deep inside the meteorite had the wrong proportions of different isotopes of nitrogen to have been formed on Earth.

That means extra-terrestrial life – and its precursors – is left-handed, just like life on Earth. But many cosmic objects are far older than the Solar System, which formed about 5 billion years ago.

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Aids in US is spreading faster among women than men

Researchers have discovered that Aids is spreading more quickly among women in the United States than among men and that sexual contact — not infected needles — is the leading cause. The new findings offer a gloomy counterpoint to recent happier news on the treatment of Aids. In New York, David Usborne takes a look.

In most of the developed world, at least, the enemy has been in retreat all year. Study after study have shown new success in the prescription of drug cocktails to tame the impact on patients of HIV, the virus that leads to Aids.

Last week, officials in Washington offered this: the Aids mortality rate in America fell 26 per cent between 1995 and 1996. Moreover, the disease lost its crown as the leading cause of death among 25 to 44-year-old Americans. Now it is number two, just behind accidents and a little ahead of cancer.

But this latest report, published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* and completed by researchers

at the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta, stops the music: there is still no vaccination and more Americans, especially the poor and disadvantaged, are getting the virus.

Moreover, the report, which spans 1991 to the end of 1995, shows that the number of those infected is now climbing fastest among American women.

"There has been a lot of attention on the declining death rate; this is the rest of the story," said Daniel Zingale, who is director of the US advocacy group Aids Action.

The number of women diagnosed with Aids between 1991 and 1995 grew in the United States by 63 per cent compared with an increase of 12.8 per cent for men. By the end of 1995, there were 67,400 women diagnosed with the disease since the epidemic began. Of those, 11,500 were identified in 1995.

Even so, Aids, once dubbed the gay man's plague, is still more prevalent among men than women. In 1995, for instance, the cases of women infected with HIV remained only about 19 per cent of the total for the year.

Attracting particular concern, however, are the behavioural findings behind the statistics. The CDC suggests that while sharing of dirty needles was for a long time con-



Elizabeth Glaser, wife of the actor Paul Michael Glaser, who contracted Aids through a blood transfusion, and died aged 47. She was a tireless campaigner for women with Aids.
Photograph: Alain Berliner/FSP

sidered the principle source of HIV infection among women patients, since 1993 sex with infected men has become the main culprit.

By 1995, 52 per cent of Aids cases among women could be traced back to sex with-

infected men, up from 40 per cent in 1991. By comparison, about 53 per cent of the men who contracted HIV in 1993 did so through homosexual contact. That was sharply down from 63 per cent in 1991. The sexual contact dimension is especially

important, the study says, among women under the age of 25. They are 2½ times more likely to catch HIV from sexual contact than by exposure to dirty needles for drug injection.

"It's critical to reach young people before they reach the

age of having sex and injecting drugs," urged Dr Pascale Wortley, the chief researcher on the study. "The key is, get them before they even start."

Among the more striking findings in the study was that many adolescent women were

contracting the virus through sexual contact with men significantly older than themselves. Moreover, the greater the age-gap, the less likely it was that the woman, often in her teens, would insist on him using a condom.

Researchers also confirmed fears that Aids is spreading fastest in the American Deep South. They suggested that this was caused by an epidemic of cocaine use in the region as well as the predominance, especially among poorer groups, of syphilis.

While the figures in the study do not go beyond the end of 1995, officials have indicated that new statistics due out later this week will confirm the same trends.

Doctors urge patients with flu to treat themselves

Patients with colds and flu are clogging up GPs' surgeries and preventing those with more serious conditions getting treatment. A campaign launched yesterday seeks to persuade people to stay away from the surgery this winter. Jeremy Lawrence, Health Editor, reports.

Up to half of patients consulting GPs during the peak winter colds and flu season seek treatment for conditions that doctors can do nothing about.

The 4 million adults who made the trip to the surgery last winter with "flu" symptoms — aches, pains, coughs and sneezes — could have saved themselves the trouble by stocking up on over-the-counter remedies, doctors say.

Antibiotics, which tackle bacteria, are useless against colds and flu, which are caused by viruses. That leaves doctors able to offer only the same advice as pharmacists — drink plenty of liquids and take an

over-the-counter flu remedy.

The Doctor Patient Partnership, a collaboration between the British Medical Association and the Patients' Association, backed by £3m of Government funding, launched its flu campaign yesterday, urging people to stock up on paracetamol and cough medicine before the winter.

Dr Simon Fradd, chairman of the partnership, said: "Unfortunately, we don't have a magic treatment for colds and flu. Antibiotics don't work. All we can give is medicine to treat the symptoms which people can buy for themselves."

He denied doctors were seeking an easier life by turning patients away. "This is not about withdrawing services, it is about helping the public to treat themselves better."

Dr Fradd said the "sad thing" was that many people came into the surgery having had flu for four or five days and had taken nothing for it. Early treatment helped reduce discomfort.

One trick, when symptoms were bad, was to take aspirin and paracetamol in combination. Dr Fradd said: "They are totally different drugs and they

work in different ways. Aspirin reduces inflammation and takes away the aches. Paracetamol is a painkiller that enables tolerance of the symptoms."

Neither drug may be taken more often than once in six hours but combined they can be alternated every three hours.

"Most people would take a few days to start to feel better and should treat themselves for at least a week before ringing the surgery," Dr Fradd added. "Of course, if you or your child have very severe symptoms, become unduly short of breath, cough up blood or large amounts of green or yellow phlegm, you should call your GP for advice."

Cathy Gritzer, general manager of the Patients' Association, said the campaign was necessary to ease the pressure on GPs and allow the seriously ill to be treated more quickly and given more time. "We know a lot of patients have difficulty getting to see their GPs, with long waits for appointments. If people with colds and flu can treat themselves those who are not at all well can get to see the GP more quickly and obtain the help they need."

Getting sacked or divorced is more stressful than going to jail

A new ranking of the most stressful life events shows that people find it more disturbing to be divorced or fired from work than to go to prison. Jeremy Lawrence, Health Editor, reports on a league table of psychiatric risks.

The prospect of suffering a major personal injury or illness is much more worrying to people than it was 20 years ago. It comes sixth in a list of the most stressful life events, up from 16 in a similar list drawn up 20 years ago.

The ranking, by US psychiatrists, is based on a study of 427 volunteers who were asked to assess 87 life events. The results showed changes compared with rankings made in 1977, with greater concern about health, relationship and work difficulties, but less concern about money, retirement and sex.

The study, published in the *Journal of Psychosomatic Research* and reported by Hospi-

LIFE'S TRIALS — THEN AND NOW

- 1977
1. Death of spouse
 2. Divorce
 3. Death of close family member
 4. Marital separation
 5. Fired from work
 6. Major illness or injury
 7. Jail term
 8. Death of close friend
 9. Pregnancy
 10. Major business readjustment
 11. Loan repayment demand
 12. Gain new family member
 13. Marital reconciliation
 14. Change in health of family
 15. Change in financial state

- 1997
1. Death of spouse
 2. Death of close family member
 3. Fired from work
 4. Divorce
 5. Pregnancy
 6. Jail term
 7. Loan repayment demand
 8. Marital separation
 9. Change in health of family member
 10. Marriage
 11. Retirement
 12. Sexual difficulties
 13. Change in financial state
 14. Gain new family member
 15. Death of close friend

tal Doctor, showed that women scored 86 of the 87 events as more stressful than men. However, the researchers, from the Veterans Affairs Medical Centre, in Reno, Nevada, claim this does not show that women overreact to life stresses, but that men underreact.

An earlier scale was produced in the 1960s and the au-

thors of the new study say overall life stress appears to have increased by 45 per cent over the 40 year period.

Unmarried people gave higher scores across the range of events than those who were married indicating that the single find life a greater trial than those who can look to a partner for support.

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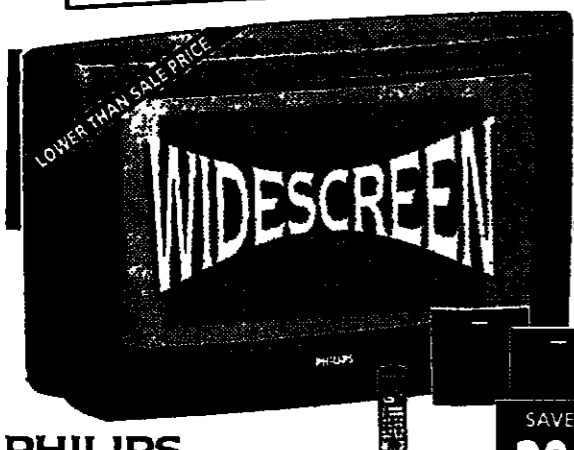
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Hackney puts safety of pupils at risk

Safety and well-being of children at schools in a rundown part of London is at risk, according to a ferociously critical report to be released today.

In an unprecedented verdict, inspectors found that Hackney, which oversees the education of more than 10,000 children, is breaking the law by failing them badly. Anthony Bevins and Judith Judd report.

Hackney politicians are preparing to accept the offer of an intervention team appointed by the Government to sort out the borough's education service.

A report from inspectors at the Office for Standards in Education to be published today is expected to argue that the administration in Hackney has collapsed. Some children are not even being given places in school and the authority is failing to offer support to its 69 schools.

It will paint a picture of a drifting and leaderless education authority which lacks not only a director of education but also an entire second tier of officers. Ministers' decision to send in a team of experts reflects their determination to be as tough on failing education authorities as on failing schools.

Richard Painter, who headed the hit squad for Hackney Downs School which led to its closure, will lead the team, which has been given until January to report. Two other members are Ann Sofer, Tower Hamlets' former director of education and Pat Collarbone, a former Hackney head. Extra

money will be on offer as an inducement to councillors to agree to intervention.

At present, the Government cannot force the authority to accept help, though it has said that it intends to acquire new powers to take over failing local education authorities in the education bill to be published this autumn.

Every headteacher in Hackney will this morning receive a fax explaining that the intervention is intended to deal with the problems at the town hall and is not a reflection on schools' or teachers' efforts. All parents will also be sent letters of explanation.

Brian Sedgemore, Labour MP for Hackney South and Shoreditch, said: "This has got a lot worse over the last 18 months after control of the borough was taken over by a coalition of Tories, Liberals and expelled Labour councillors. There has been no director of education for the last 18 months and control has been left in the hands of third-tier officers. The chief executive has lost the plot."

Conservatives, Liberal Democrats and Labour councillors said last night that they would welcome the offer of the Government-appointed team.

Mark Lushington, divisional secretary of the Hackney branch of the National Union of Teachers, said: "Many good things are happening in Hackney. We are one of the fastest improving local education authorities in terms of GCSE results in the last seven years."

"Some council officers have been extremely supportive but there has been a lack of leadership and grip since the dissolution of the Inner London Education Authority. We believe in local democracy but we have not been well served by politicians."



Donna Campbell, who attends Cardinal Pole School, in Homerton, east London, a school under the care of the much-criticised Hackney borough education service, which is set to be taken over by a Government-appointed team

Photograph: Peter Macdarmid

History of in-fighting and bad managers

Heads and teachers in Hackney believe that the collapse of the education authority is the result of both political in-fighting and weak management.

The ruling Labour group on the north-east London council was disbanded by the national party last year after 17 out of 36 of them voted with Conservatives and Liberal Democrats against the party's official candidate for mayor. The decision came after Labour's national executive had spent months investigating the group over allegations of dirty tricks, vote-rigging and the formation of an unofficial caucus.

At the end of July last year, Gus John, Britain's first black director of education, took early retirement after three months on sick leave. He accused councillors of behaving like "a bunch of gangsters putting out a contract on someone then gathering at their funeral to speak eloquent eulogies". He said that they had failed to defend him from attacks by left-wing teachers and gay activists.

In August the party tried to end a war between factions in the council. Five members were suspended and the leader and local party chairman were in effect barred from holding office for 22 months.

The five were suspended after claims that an unauthorised decision-making body had been forming policy in private.

The split among Labour councillors persists with those expelled from the party often voting alongside Liberal Democrats and Conservatives.

There has been no director of education for 18 months and, during that time, there have been two attempts to restructure the council in different ways.

The instability has led to the departure of nearly all the council's senior education officers. The last remaining senior official leaves for a job in Camden this week.

Hackney schools have hit the headlines in unwelcome ways. Hackney Downs was the first school to be taken over by a hit squad set up by the previous government after inspectors declared that it was failing its pupils.

A storm also broke over Kingsmead primary school where the head, Jane Brown, refused tickets for pupils to attend a performance of a ballet of *Romeo and Juliet* because it was "entirely about heterosexual love."

— Judith Judd

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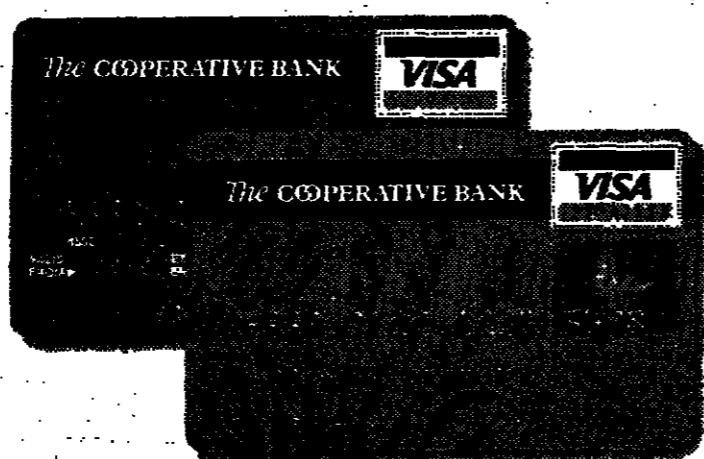
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Fraud crackdown will root out dentists' tricks and dodges

Some dentists have falsely claimed they open their surgeries at weekends to deal with emergency cases in order to obtain bonus payments from the NHS. It is one of the tricks which are to be rooted out in a crackdown on fraud in dentistry to be announced today, reports Colin Brown, Chief Political Correspondent.

The Government will today announce that it is tightening checks on NHS payments to stop fraud by dentists who have been overcharging for their work.

Alan Milburn, the health minister, ordered the crackdown after a series of cases which showed that a number of dentists were using a range of fiddles. Some dentists had been caught claiming for work that they had never carried out, others invented and claimed for imaginary patients, while others overcharged genuine patients and pocketed the money.

Ministerial sources said last night that the vast majority of dentists were honest, hardworking professionals, but a series of court cases raised alarm about the possible abuses of the system.

In one case, a dentist from East Sussex was sentenced to six months' imprisonment after admitting pocketing £4,000 in false claims from a practice in Eastbourne. She treated patients during nor-

mal surgery hours and then claimed the maximum emergency call-out fee for the work by claiming it was done at the weekend.

In another case, a dentist in Eltham, south London, was struck off by a professional conduct committee after making false claims for work he had never done. He failed to submit five X-rays he claimed money for to the Dental Practice Board on time, and overcharged two patients who were seen by a hygienist.

"This present situation is totally unacceptable. These people are criminals and are stealing money that should be going into treating patients," said Mr Milburn.

The extent of the fraud nationally is not known, but Mr Milburn said the checks in his department had shown the areas where there was scope for abuse, and where procedures could be tightened up.

Mr Milburn also is ordering action to stop some patients from falsely claiming they are exempt from charges to obtain dental treatment free of charge on the NHS. More vigorous checks are to be carried out on patient's claims for charge exemption to weed out those claiming falsely.

The action to be taken will include reviewing the wording of the dental fee scale to make it more difficult for dentists to make fraudulent claims; supporting the Dental Practice Board in its drive for more probity; strengthening links between the DPB and health authorities to stamp out fraud; and consultations with the dentists' professional bodies to continue the attack on fraud.

Venables accuses Alan Sugar of forcing him out of Spurs

Soccer chief Terry Venables told a court yesterday he was forced out of Tottenham Hotspur Football Club by his "untruthful" and "greedy" partner Alan Sugar. He claimed that when the once "horrendously" debt-ridden club began raking in millions under their management, the Arsenal chief decided he wanted it all to himself. Then, when fans turned against him, he tried to "justify" himself by "throwing all sorts of lies against me," said Mr Venables. He was then questioned by the Serious Fraud Office and the Department of Trade and Industry.

Mr Venables was giving evidence at Knightsbridge Crown Court, central London for business associate Eddie Ashby, who denies being involved in company management while an undischarged bankrupt. "I lost the club because he (Mr Sugar) was greedy and then the England job was affected because people on the international committee got nervous," Mr Venables branded Mr Sugar as "untruthful" and said their relationship went from bad to worse.

Mammoth revival

Japanese scientist Kazufumi Goto believes that mammoth carcasses buried for thousands of years beneath the Siberian permafrost could still have intact sperm - and that this could be recovered and the DNA used to inseminate African elephants, the mammoths' closest living relative.

Woolly mammoths lived alongside humans and were widespread until the end of the Ice Age 10,000 years ago cut down their sources of food. Six have been found frozen beneath the permafrost in Siberia. According to *New Scientist* magazine, Dr Goto reckons that if any male specimens are found, sperm DNA could be extracted, frozen and returned to the Kagoshima University in Japan. Dr Goto has already demonstrated that DNA from dead bull sperm can be injected into cows' eggs to produce viable cattle embryos. He believes the same system could also work for mammoths, using elephant eggs. But Adrian Lister of University College London is sceptical. He points out that it needs a male carcass whose sperm DNA has survived non-medical freezing and thawing. "Everything we know about preservation of DNA in frozen tissues suggests it's smashed up into fragments," he told *New Scientist*.

Charles Arthur, Science Editor

Laboratory staff cruel to dogs

Two staff at one of Britain's largest animal testing companies were yesterday given community service orders after admitting being cruel to dogs. Robert Waters and Andrew Mash, who both work at Huntingdon Life Sciences in Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire, were also ordered to pay £250 costs by magistrates in Peterborough.

Waters, 30, of Peterborough and Mash, 40, of Godmanchester, near Huntingdon, admitted charges of "cruelly terrifying dogs". The allegations were brought by police under the Protection of Animals Act after Channel 4 secretly filmed work inside a HLS laboratory for a documentary, *It's a Dog's Life*. The film showed a beagle being kicked and hurled against a wall. Staff were also shown punching and shaking dogs.

Hendrix guitar fails to sell

An electric guitar which once belonged to rock legend Jimi Hendrix failed to sell at an auction yesterday. The Fender Stratocaster had been expected to fetch about £180,000 at Sotheby's Rock 'n' Roll Memorabilia auction in London.

Bidding stopped at £100,000 - below the owner's reserve price - and the guitar was not sold.

Germany the key to lifting BSE embargo



Beef farmers at Saintfield market, Co Down yesterday

David Rose

Britain has secured the first breakthrough in its bid to dismantle the EU beef ban after EU scientists meeting in Brussels yesterday recommended a partial easing of the embargo for Northern Ireland. Katherine Butler reports from Brussels.

Independent scientists on the influential Scientific Veterinary Committee advised relaxing the ban for meat from grass-fed animals which have never come into contact with BSE and whose movements from farm to farm can be reliably traced.

The European Commission is now expected to propose an easing of the ban for beef from Northern Ireland, the only region which has the computerised records of cattle movements which scientists insist are essential before cows can be certified BSE-free. But approval or rejection for even this step lies with EU governments, represented by the separate Standing Veterinary Committee, where chief veterinary officers from each member-state sit. Germany, which has been most vociferous in opposing any easing of the trade ban, can be expected to try to influence a ruling against Britain when it comes to a vote.

Yesterday's opinion backed Northern Irish farmers' claims that they alone have an adequate computerised system for

tracking cattle movements in place. But the scientists offered little new hope on prospects for an early easing of the ban for farmers in England, Scotland or Wales. "The major stumbling-block appears to be the lack of a comprehensive computerised movement and tracing system and associated data base in Great Britain," they concluded.

Northern Ireland, which has the lowest incidence of BSE in the UK, has had computerised cattle records for nine years. By contrast, a nationwide tracing database to be sited in the North-west will only become operational in March.

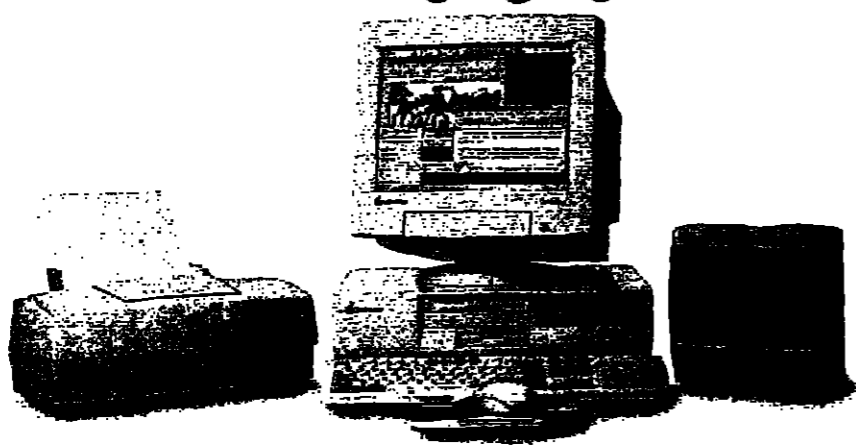
The Government must now decide whether a regional carve-up is even politically acceptable, given pressure from Scottish farmers, fearful of losing export markets to Ulster, to insist on an "all-or-nothing" approach. The Conservatives repeatedly refused to consider a region-by-region strategy to ending the ban and last night government officials would only say that the committee's opinion would be "carefully considered".

Animals eligible for certification as BSE-free would be limited to those still in the herds where they were born or for which records of every movement since birth are available, according to the recommendation. And exports would be allowed only for meat, not live cattle.

Last night the Ulster Farmers Union called for clarification of all the conditions laid down by the scientists which cover such things as health standards for farms.

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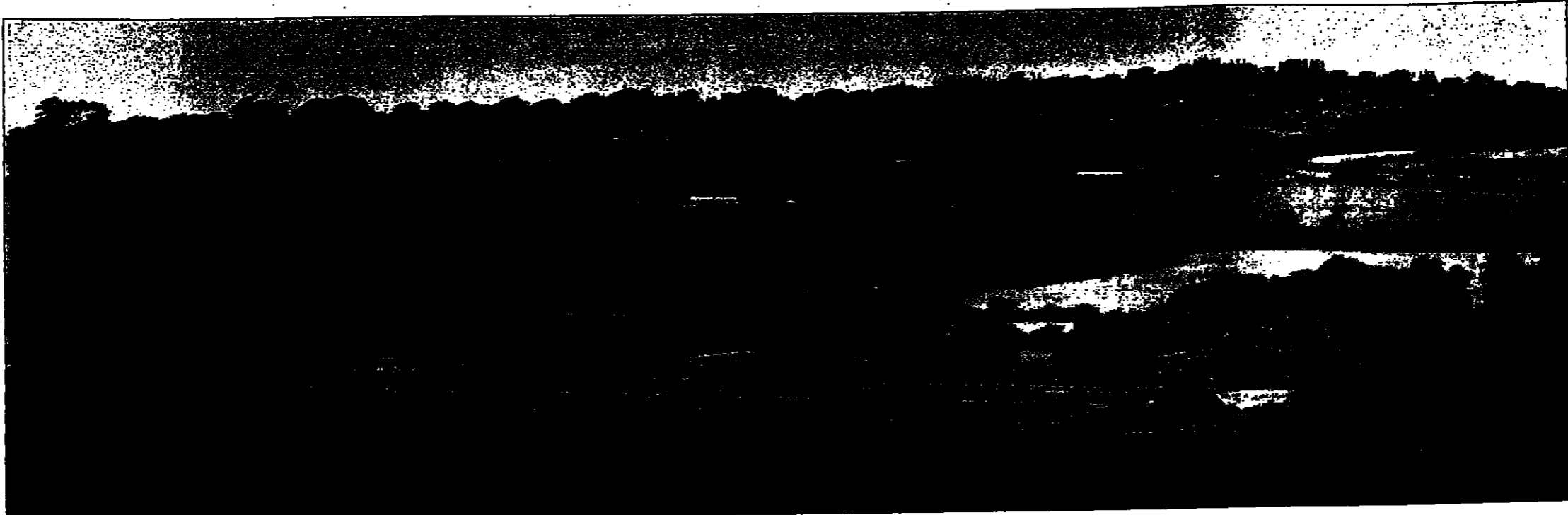
Branson's cheap rail deals become rather expensive

Entrepreneurial flair was supposed to rescue Britain's unloved railways. But when Richard Branson, the Virgin chief, tinkered with his tickets he found himself in trouble with the rail regulator.

Randeep Ramesh, Transport Correspondent, explains why Virgin Trains' big idea may be derailed.

Through train services such as the high-speed England-Scotland routes (pictured) will be affected.

Photograph: Brian Harris



Virgin CrossCountry fares, promoted as the inexpensive alternative to the car, were once cheaper than the shorter trips through busy London stations which required passengers to change trains. However, many of its Super Saver tickets are now, according to the company, "redundant" following a price hike of 15 per cent.

The rise - nearly six times inflation - by Virgin CrossCountry on rides from England to Scotland using the cheap tickets, which can be used on any day except Fridays and summer Saturdays, angered rail pressure groups. Jonathan Bray, campaigns director of Save Our Railways, said: "We warned that these unprotected fares would disappear as ruthless operators decide that they are simply unprofitable."

The company's latest move brought a terse response from the rail regulator's office, following reports that clerks at stations had inadvertently sold passengers the recently-invalidated tickets - unaware that there were now cheaper alternatives. A spokeswoman for the rail regulator said: "We will be writing to Virgin seeking an explanation. As far as what has been sold, we need the evidence before we proceed."

Richard Branson's rail company has been quick to market itself as an inexpensive, high-quality service. It claims that its £25 return apex fare - which needs to be booked seven days in advance - from London to Scotland is the cheapest ever on the railways.

Barry Doe, the transport consultant who discovered the

tickets' disappearance, said that the price rise would affect "hundreds of fares". He cited a number of examples to prove his point. These included: a trip from Winchester to Edinburgh - whose Virgin fare is now £92.20 and therefore obsolete, given the alternative is only priced at £79; the same applies to the Virgin ticket from Southampton to Glasgow, which now costs £95.80 as opposed to the once more expensive trip through London which is priced at £82 and can be used on the same through-route.

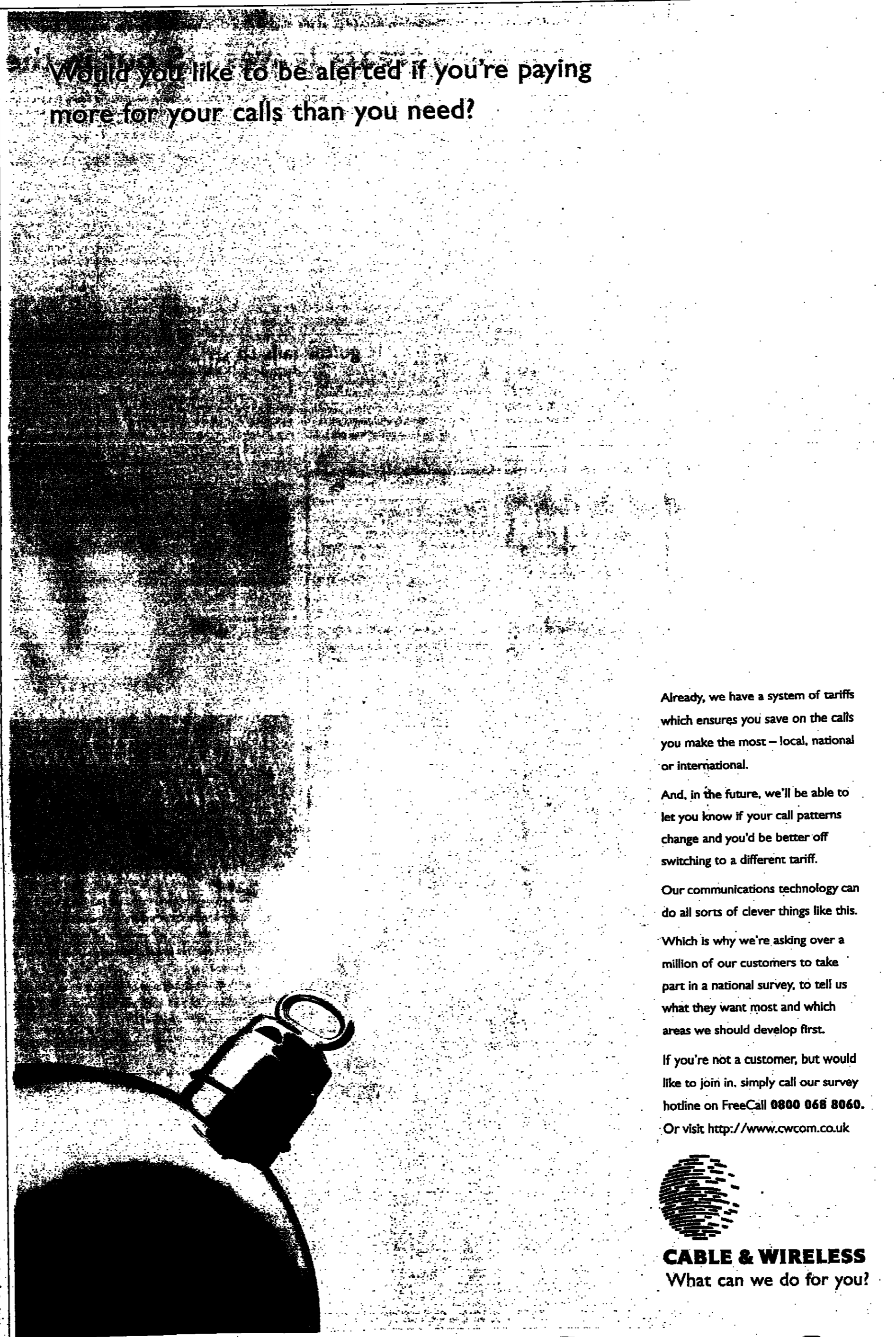
When contacted, a spokesman for Virgin said that the tickets were still being sold - but hastily retracted the statement. "For now the tickets can not be purchased. But they remain in the manuals because, who knows, we may want to reduce them in the future."

The increases are being brought in on all "Anglo-Scottish" fares controlled by CrossCountry. This will affect cheap returns to Scotland from Wales, the South West and most of the Midlands and the North-west.

Mr Branson, who took over the running of £100m CrossCountry services last year, has to increase ticket sales by 10 per cent in order to make the line profitable. His business plan is based around airline-style marketing. This means that a number of low-cost tickets have been heavily promoted by the company - but all require passengers to book their journey at least a day early and to specify outbound and return trains.

However, senior civil servants said that Virgin's move was more "cock-up than conspiracy".

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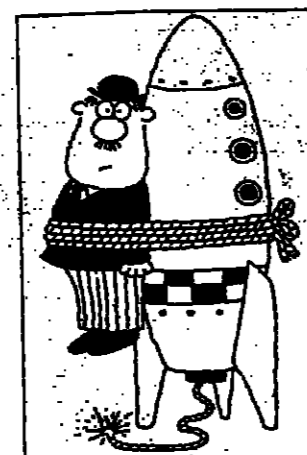


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Officious taxmen get a reprimand

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Andrew Verity studies the withering findings of a report on incompetence among the people who collect our taxes and national insurance contributions.



Getting a rocket: Tax officials are under attack

Tax officials across the Government's operations came under ferocious attack yesterday from the body in charge of investigating complaints. Elizabeth Filkin, the official adjudicator of complaints, said that curt, abrasive officials were making their own mistakes much worse while progress in handling complaints was moving at a "snail's pace".

In one of the worst cases, Robert Herriot, a partner in a business called Herriot Turner, of Wiveliscombe, Somerset, was made bankrupt when solicitors acting for Customs and Excise pursued him to court over a VAT debt. But he had already agreed with Customs to repay the debt in instalments.

When Mr Herriot applied successfully to have the bankruptcy annulled, he was forced to pay the official receiver's costs of £3,400. Only when he took his complaint to the adjudicator did Customs agree to pay those costs.

Ms Filkin, the only independent body capable of investigating tax complaints outside the courts, yesterday delivered a litany of damning conclusions. She said the organisations were unwilling to acknowledge mistakes, and too often complaints were investigated poorly. She also accused them of being "overbearing" and of lacking the commitment to improve the service.

Singling out the Contributions Agency, which collects national insurance payments and comes under the aegis of the Department of Social Security, she said officials were breaching customer confidentiality and causing excessive delays. A staggering 80 per cent of complaints had been upheld. Damning criticism was also meted out to the Inland Revenue.

12/POLITICS



John Prescott (with Peter Hain in the background) campaigning on the referendum in Pontypridd yesterday

Photograph: Tom Pilston

Pass the plate, Paddy...don't worry about the policies

"Paddy! Hi! Come in! Good to see you. You know Gordon, Peter, Jack and - of course - Big John. And your team is... Alan I know, Ming I know, Lord Holmes I know, Lembit... er... I'm sorry. Lembit Opik! Of course. Is Opik an Irish name, Lembit? Estonian, silly me. Impressive nation, the Estonians. I had the Estonian PM over here a month ago, talking about bauxite, I think. And there's an Estonian in Euan's class at the Oratory. What's that, Gordon? It's a Finno-Ugric language, apparently, according to Gordon, and loosely related to Magyar. You always learn something with the Chancellor in the room.

"And how are Jane? And the children? And, of course, the little grandson? I found those photographs during the election of you and the baby in France genuinely moving. Y'know, Paddy, I often think about being a granddad, strolling over the hills, that little hand clamped in mine. Eventually, but not yet, eh! Anyway, sit down, sit down! Paddy, sit there on the opposite side of the table. When the photographers have taken their snaps you can

move to this chair next to me, if you'd like.

"Now, who wants some tea? Or coffee? Jack, that's four teas, and four coffees. I'll just stick to the carrot juice, thanks. Some cake, Paddy? I'm told by my office that this is your favourite - lemon drizzle cake as made by Mrs Tarantino of Eastbourne. Take two, take two. Surely you've got room for more - an ex-Marine like you!

"Look, I really am grateful to you for giving up your time like this. I know how busy you

phases different policies, but the voters know that we have a great deal in common. They know that we can work together, whether it be John here, you, Paddy, or even old Kenneth Clarke, in equal partnership.

I have to say - you know - how immensely impressed I was with all your work up in Scotland. Donald says that if it weren't for you, the Yes vote could easily have slipped below the 70 per cent mark. Wales is a big of a cliffhanger, though, isn't it? Next item is the reform of the House of Lords. Paddy, your plate's empty, and I did get the cake especially for you. Look, the good news is that we're going to do it as soon as we possibly can, certainly in the next year or two.

"Now I know you're concerned with progress on Freedom of Information. [interrupted by aide]. Gosh, is that the time? I've got the Guatemalan President for lunch over at the Palace and I really shouldn't keep Her Majesty waiting. She's had a very hard time of it. Paddy, Alan, Richard, Ming, Limpet, good and useful to see you all. We must do it again. Soon."

SKETCH
BY DAVID
AARONOVITCH

are. But I'm hoping that this can be a regular consultation, with your views and contributions feeding directly into the Government's deliberations and - I'm not afraid to say it - sometimes even affecting the policy of the Government itself. Tradition demands that we attend different conferences, stand different candidates, and em-

Hague makes final pitch for Wales

William Hague yesterday paid his last visit to Wales to rally support for the no vote before today's referendum. Meanwhile, plans were being drawn up for using the Conservative conference to stop anti-Hague sniping. Tony Heath and Colin Brown report.

Like a football manager struggling to entice a team faced with relegation, William Hague trotted out to the pitch of Wales yesterday to give the anti-devolutionists in the build-up to today's poll.

At the same time, it emerged in London that John Major and Baroness Thatcher could play key roles at the party conference next month to help secure a show of support for their successor.

In Wales, Mr Hague's message to a gathering in Monmouth - a couple of dozen "No" supporters waving placards and a handful of puzzled citizens attracted by the inevitable media scrum - was simple.

An elected assembly would do nothing to improve services like education and health and would cost more than £1m over four years. "It would be nothing more than a talking shop and a terrible waste of money," the leader of the Opposition declared.

With Wales a Tory-free zone since the general election, Mr Hague relied on the support of Michael Ancram, the Tories' constitutional supremo, and two colleagues who lost their seats on 1 May. Sebastian Coe was kept busy signing autographs rather than his leader, meeting a public whose uninterest occasionally verged on boredom.

After having his photograph taken next to a "No Waiting" traffic sign - something the likes of Peter Mandelson would never have allowed - Mr Hague posed beneath a statue of Charles Rolls, a co-founder of Rolls Royce, who live near the town.

Mr Hague avoided accidents by carefully repeating the mantra that, as Secretary of State for Wales under John Major, he had upped the country's profile, brought in barrowloads of inward investment and had learnt to love his fiefdom.

His own true love, Ffion Jenkins, the daughter of Emyr Jenkins, chief executive of the Arts Council of Wales, was elsewhere. Mr Hague skillfully avoided press interest in his fiancée's devotion leanings.

During his trip, Mr Hague attempted to deflect the attacks on his adviser, Alan Duncan. He said: "Everything I said was my responsibility. I see one or two comments about advisers of mine. I take the responsibility for what I do and I will worry about who my advisers are. We don't live in a one-party state. It's not illegal to criticise the Government. We have been criticising them where they deserve it on a range of matters."

Mr Hague returned to London last night for a meeting of the Shadow Cabinet at which the arrangements for the morale boosting party conference were being discussed.

After suffering the heaviest political defeat this century, Mr Major is expected to meet a wave of sympathy at the conference, and give his backing to Mr Hague. Lady Thatcher, who still carries weight with the rank and file, will appear on the platform later in the week to reinforce her support for the new leader.

This may be seen as an attempt to shore up support for Mr Hague, but last night the rumblings of discontent within the Shadow Cabinet over his leadership appear to have faded.

The Tory leader is anxious also to avoid a rebuff at the party conference over reforms to the party being drawn up by Archie Norman. Some activists in the Tory Charter Movement will oppose them, but they will go through to a full-scale conference in the Spring. He said he would quit the leadership if they were rejected, raising the stakes to ensure they get through.

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Unionist standard bearers square up to Sinn Fein

David Trimble's Ulster Unionist party yesterday took a hugely significant step in the Northern Ireland peace process by joining the Stormont talks which include Sinn Fein. David McKitterick, Ireland Correspondent, reports they are expected to meet the republicans face-to-face next week.

The Ulster Unionist at the gate, wearing a pinstripe suit and holding an incongruous can of Coke, got the message to his party colleagues that Gerry Adams and Sinn Fein had safely entered the talks building. The coast was clear. The cheerful Stormont gatekeeper swung open the big gate and in they flowed, a slow-moving phalanx of 30 men and a couple of women, the standard-bearers of Ulster Unionism on their way to confront Sinn Fein.

David Trimble led the way, flanked by MPs John Taylor and Ken Maginnis, walking towards the massed media. He had, as they say up the Shankill, brought backings with him, for he led in not just his own party but also the two small but important loyalist groupings, the Progressive Unionists and Ulster Democratic party.

They made their way towards the second gate at a dignified pace, then Mr Trim-

ble paused to tell the cameras: "We are not here to negotiate with Sinn Fein but to confront them - to expose their fascist character. Unionism will not be marginalised."

Unknown to Mr Trimble, a Sinn Fein representative leaned in from the edge of the media scrum to hear his words, with what looked suspiciously like the trace of a smile. He seemed pleased at the UUP leader's words, signifying as they did that a face-to-face encounter was not far off.

David Ervine of the DUP said a few words, as did the UDP's Gary McMichael, whose father, a loyalist paramilitary leader, was killed by the IRA. Then they walked through the doors that would lead them into talks. Close up, it seemed less like a bold radical initiative than bowing to the inevitable. With John Major in power the UUP spent months fending off contact with the republicans; the change came when Tony Blair took over.

Yesterday the party was caught in a pincer movement, one part of which was government pressure to get into talks. The other came from underneath - from, astonishingly, the once legendary intractable loyalist grassroots. First an opinion poll showed 93 per cent of the party's supporters wanted talks, and then, at Saturday's meeting of the party executive, more than 30 of the 36 speakers urged dialogue. Together these forces made entry into the talks an imperative which even Tuesday's

bombing in Markethill could not deflect.

The Rev Ian Paisley's party remains aloof, yesterday accusing Mr Trimble of being "terrorised to the talks table." But the loyalist paramilitary hardliners, who are in a position to attack the talks with much more than mere rhetoric, were there in Mr Trimble's phalanx, ready to talk.

The three-party arrangement represented a display of Unionist and loyalist solidarity, though it did so at some cost to the arguments Mr Trimble will use in the talks when he insists on arms de-commissioning. In the ranks of his phalanx were four men who committed six murders and served long sentences for them. Though known now as politicians, the illegal groups which their parties represent are as adamant as the IRA that no guns will be de-commissioned this side of a settlement.

Mr Maginnis seemed his usual affable self during the walk but the day must have been difficult for him. He has been an IRA target for more than a quarter of a century, first as a member of the Ulster Defence Regiment and then as an MP.

He spoke once of his murdered colleagues: "I think I have lost almost all my closest friends in the UDR... all decent, dependable fellows." But yesterday he walked into Stormont to see if he could do business with republicans, wondering, with everyone, else whether through talks the hurt might some day be replaced with hope.



Talking point: David Trimble (front) and Gary McMichael at Stormont yesterday Photograph: Martin Wright/Facemaker

Low paid health staff hoping for wage gain

The Government yesterday announced a review of the pay system for all NHS staff from consultants to hospital porters. Colin Brown, Chief Political Correspondent, reports on a hint of optimism among workers at the bottom.

Thousands of low-paid health workers who lost out under the Tories are hoping they will catch up lost ground as a result of a fundamental review of pay within the National Health Service. Many of those on less than £4 an hour are not covered by pay review bodies and their union, Unison, estimates that they have seen their pay slip by 25 per cent compared with other groups since the independent pay review bodies were set up in 1984.

Ministers called for affordable settlements in next year's pay round, but yesterday in its evidence to two of the NHS pay review bodies, the Department of Health announced that the whole system was under review.

This could lead to the existing independent pay review bodies for doctors, dentists, nurses, midwives and groups allied to medicine - about 60 per cent of the 900,000 NHS employees - being replaced by a single system for determining pay in all grades. Low-paid workers, such as porters, not currently covered, could be included for the first time.

GPs, nurses and dentists are being consulted, but they are opposed to the change. The British Medical Association has criticised the Doctors and Dentists' Pay Review Body but is ready to defend its independence. "We have criticised their findings but we have not criticised the concept of an independent body," a BMA source said. "We would be very hostile to abolishing it."

Nurses have expressed worries, and the British Dental Association said: "We would be concerned that if the pay of all NHS healthcare professionals were brought into a single system, the voices of small groups might not be heard."

Unison said that all the grades it represented, including nurses, were united behind a fairer pay system. A spokeswoman said they hoped for "a single pay spine for all groups", and conditions harmonised for all groups.

Ministerial sources were worried that the consultation will raise false hopes of a massive pay rise for the low paid. "We are talking about greater equity but anything that is suggested has got to be affordable," said a source. That could mean slicing the cake differently, without increasing it.

'Lab-Dem' committee begins work on reforms

The new "Lab-Dem" Cabinet committee joined by Paddy Ashdown and other Liberal Democrats met for the first time yesterday afternoon to discuss an agenda for constitutional reform.

After a 90-minute working session in the Cabinet room at Number 10 the Liberal Democrat leader said: "Building on the momentum of the referendum in Scotland and in Wales, we are modernising Britain."

"This is about opening a path for a more modern style of politics. We have had a very

constructive meeting and we look forward to building on that so we can work together to modernise Britain's constitution in the future."

With the meeting bound by the confidentiality that surrounds all Cabinet discussion, Mr Ashdown and his four parliamentary colleagues refused to go into detail about the substance of the talks, but the Prime Minister's office said the main constitutional issues had been examined.

"In particular, they acknowledged the beneficial effects of working closely

together on the referendum campaigns and agreed to co-operate closely on the legislation which follows," a spokesman said.

Members of the committee recognise that cross-party co-operation will help avoid some of the problems associated with the debate over the failure of Labour's devolution package in the 1970s.

The meeting also included discussion about the incorporation into UK law of the European Convention on Human Rights, the 1999 Euro-elections - which will be the first national elections to be held under proportional representation - and the creation of a commission to consider an agreed option on PR for Westminster parliamentary elections, to be set up this autumn.

That commission will report within a year, and there will be a referendum offering the voters PR for general elections - to be staged before the next election. Completion of the process could then be one of the key offers made to voters by the alliance at the next election. Anthony Bevis

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White flag is raised in battle of the press barons

Fireworks, if not fisticuffs, were expected yesterday when the editors of two Tory national newspapers came face-to-face after a ferocious public feud following the death of Diana, Princess of Wales. But, as Rob Brown, Media Editor, explains, peace appears to have broken out.

Charles Moore, editor of the *Daily Telegraph*, is rarely bested in the self-righteous stakes. And so it proved yesterday when the code of practice committee of the Press Complaints Commission met to discuss how the press might win back public trust in the aftermath of Princess Diana's death.

Mr Moore arrived at the meeting, held in the Newspaper Society's offices in Bloomsbury, north London, armed with a letter from Earl Spencer, in which the princess's brother appealed to the press to put its own house in order or Parliament would bring forth privacy legislation.

"I wanted to put a bomb under the complacency of the tabloids about their intrusion

into the lives of members of the royal family," said Mr Moore. "We've done that very strongly for the last week and people have noticed. Earl Spencer and I are both trying in quite separate ways to draw attention to the crisis of confidence in the press caused by the intrusion of privacy."

The letter from the earl was addressed to the entire committee, comprising a dozen editors drawn from the regions as well as the nationals. But Mr Moore must have savoured the fact that it had been faxed to his office and not that of the committee's chairman, Sir David English, editor-in-chief of *The Daily Mail*.

Scarcely had Diana's body been laid to rest at her ancestral home in Althorp, Northamptonshire, before a vicious slanging match erupted between the *Mail* and the *Telegraph*. The unseemly squabble started when Mr Moore accused the *Mail* of being prominent in the media pack which hounded Diana.

Conrad Black, Canadian proprietor of the *Telegraph*, then penned a polemical letter in which he stated that having Sir David English as chairman of the commission's code of practice committee was like having Al Capone investigating crime in 1920s Chicago.

Paul Dacre, editor of the *Mail*, weighed in, through an article in *The Guardian*, in which he claimed that Princess Diana liked his paper. "It might grieve Charles Moore to know that, next to the dreaded paparazzi, the princess most disliked him and his paper," he wrote.

This was followed up yesterday by a letter from Lord Rothermere, chairman of the Daily Mail and General Trust, which was published on the *Telegraph*'s letters page.

Last night, however, a truce appeared to have been reached. Sir David phoned Mr Moore with what he called "a flag of truce". But he swiftly added: "We weren't pleading for peace and begging for mercy."

The *Telegraph* editor agreed to call a halt to hostilities. But he made sure everyone knew that Sir David had been the first to wave a white flag.

Meanwhile, following yesterday's meeting, the PCC said it is to examine its code of practice and in particular the issues highlighted by Diana's death - press intrusion, harassment and respect for privacy.

"As those charged with defining the code of practice, which sets the benchmarks for the ethical and professional standards of journalism, we are now undertaking an urgent review," it said.



VISCOUNT ROTHERMERE

The last proper English press baron, this old Etonian wouldn't savour a slanging match with some uppity colonial. But don't be fooled by his benign patrician appearance or his devotion to Buddhism.

The win-at-all-costs culture at Associated Newspapers stems from his steely determination to preserve the Harmsworth inheritance. At 72 that remains unshaken. By and large, though, he is a delegator, employing others to read the pulse of Middle England. Apart from letter in the *Telegraph* yesterday, hitting back at Black, he has left it to Sir David English (Chairman of Associated) and Paul Dacre (Editor of the *Daily Mail*) to defend the honour of the *Daily Mail*.



CONRAD BLACK

Having emerged from the frozen north of Canada to construct an international newspaper empire from scratch, the 49-year-old proprietor of the *Telegraph* is as pugnacious as he is rapacious.

Driven apparently by a sense of divine destiny he tends to heap unholily abuse on those who thwart his acquisitive ambitions. His verbal assaults are often elaborately phrased, reflecting his rich vocabulary and immense erudition. Not much consolation to those on the receiving end. But it's wiser to exchange insults rather than punches. As one biographer said, he has "the physique of a prizefighter and shoulders as broad as an Alberta buffalo".

Wakeham promises tough new privacy rules

Lord Wakeham has promised that the Press Complaints Commission's new code will impose the toughest restrictions on newspaper behaviour, writes Paul McCann.

Lord Wakeham, chairman of the Press Complaints Commission, promised the toughest tightening of the rules governing newspaper behaviour after yesterday's meeting of the PCC code committee.

The new rules are likely to outlaw completely the use of photographs taken on private property, but may add protection from harassment of people in churches and restaurants. It is also likely to strengthen the

protection of minors from any press coverage without their parents' consent. Agreement on respecting the privacy of Princes William and Harry is also expected.

The new code is expected to be ready after a full meeting of the PCC on 24 September.

In a statement following the meeting yesterday, the committee said it was undertaking an "urgent" review of the code. "The tragic death of Diana, Princess of Wales, has focused unprecedented public attention on press intrusion, harassment and respect for privacy," it said. "As those charged with defining the Code of Practice, which sets the benchmarks for the ethical and professional standards of journalism, we recognise this."

"We are now undertaking an urgent review of the code."

"As an industry we emphasise the need for the code to be followed not just in the letter but in its full spirit."

"We support Lord Wakeham's calls for wide-ranging and rigorous reforms and recognise that there is a shared determination to rid our publications of practices which we all deplore."

Lord Wakeham described the meeting as "very constructive", adding: "I am on course to make a full statement next week. The paparazzi is part of the problem, in the sense that it is the conduct of photographers generally we want to put right."

Referring to criticisms of the media made by Earl Spencer at his sister's funeral, he said: "Earl Spencer's views are very well known to me. He is very concerned about these issues."

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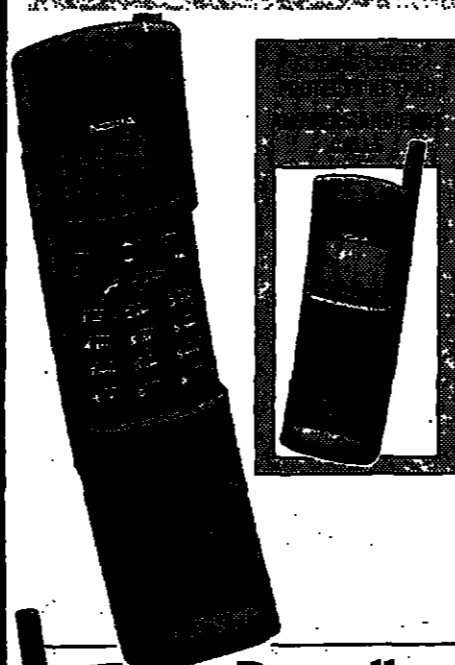
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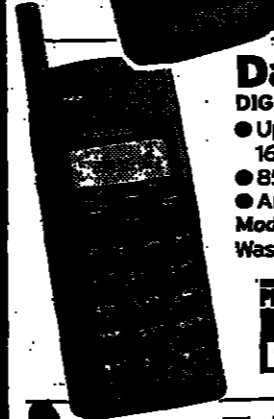
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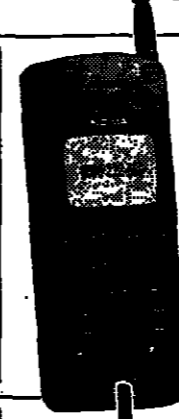


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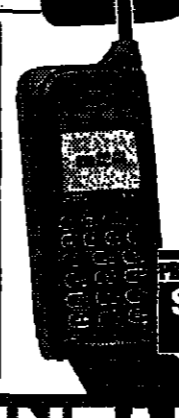


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After four years, Poland's Solidarity stages a comeback

The pendulum is swinging back in Poland. After its crushing defeat four years ago, Solidarity enters Sunday's parliamentary elections with a good chance of toppling its eternal enemy - the left. *Imre Karacs reports from Warsaw.*

It was like old times at the Ursus clubhouse. The audience have grown chubbier since the days when the tractor plant was an epicentre of revolt, but the message from the rostrum has barely changed. Poles had to make a final stand against the "communist oligarchies", intoned the speaker, Maciej Jankowski.

The Solidarity boss, head of the trade union in the Warsaw

region, occasionally let it slip that he was referring to "post-communists", but hastened to add that the threat was no less acute. Another term, and you'll never get rid of them, he warned.

In an exceptionally tranquil campaign, that is as far as opposition politicians will go to invoke the Apocalypse. The Church - Our Church, as a Solidarity official instinctively refers to it - has not seen the need to be so restrained. "Communism is like a cancer, and it has to be removed," declared Warsaw's auxiliary Archbishop, Zbigniew Kraszewski, at an outdoor mass last Sunday.

The omens for divine retribution look good. Four years in the wilderness have brought some of the children of the revolution together. United again in a 36-party block called Solidarity Election Action, they are running neck and neck in the

polls with the main governing party, the Democratic Left Alliance. Although there are at least 20 permutations in the Lego-like game to build the new government, the multi-party arithmetic favours Solidarity.

The party-cum-trade union will have to make do without Lech Walesa. The Gdansk electrician has put away his toolbox, and now sparkles only on the global lecture circuit. His successor, Marian Krzaklewski, is assured only of the former president's vague sympathy.

He will need more than that to defeat the most stable government in the post-communist era. Four years and only one prime minister lost - to unproven allegations that he

used to work for the secret police - is the proud record of the outgoing administration. That and unprecedented economic boom, with annual growth of 6 per cent in the last three years,

unemployment down by a third and real incomes soaring.

"A good today, a better tomorrow," the ex-communists' election posters pledge. Against that, Solidarity can only carp. The boom, it argues with some justification, is the direct result of reforms launched by its government on the first day of this decade. Three years later, the "shock therapy" drove the doctor out of business, but the beneficial effects are now being felt.

Not everybody has gained, of course. On the street, old ladies sell off the last threadbare items from their wardrobe. Even the government admits that the pension system, costing companies 48 per cent of staff wages, is a disaster. Unemployment still lurks around 12 per cent, and much of the country's heavy industry is kept afloat only by subsidies. Agriculture is reckoned to be the most inefficient in Europe.

With the economy ticking over nicely and Poland set for EU and Nato membership with bipartisan support, Solidarity only has the anti-communist card to play. The government's recent efforts to pack the boards of state-run companies and the civil service with party loyalists has brought back memories of the communist's nomenklatura of old.

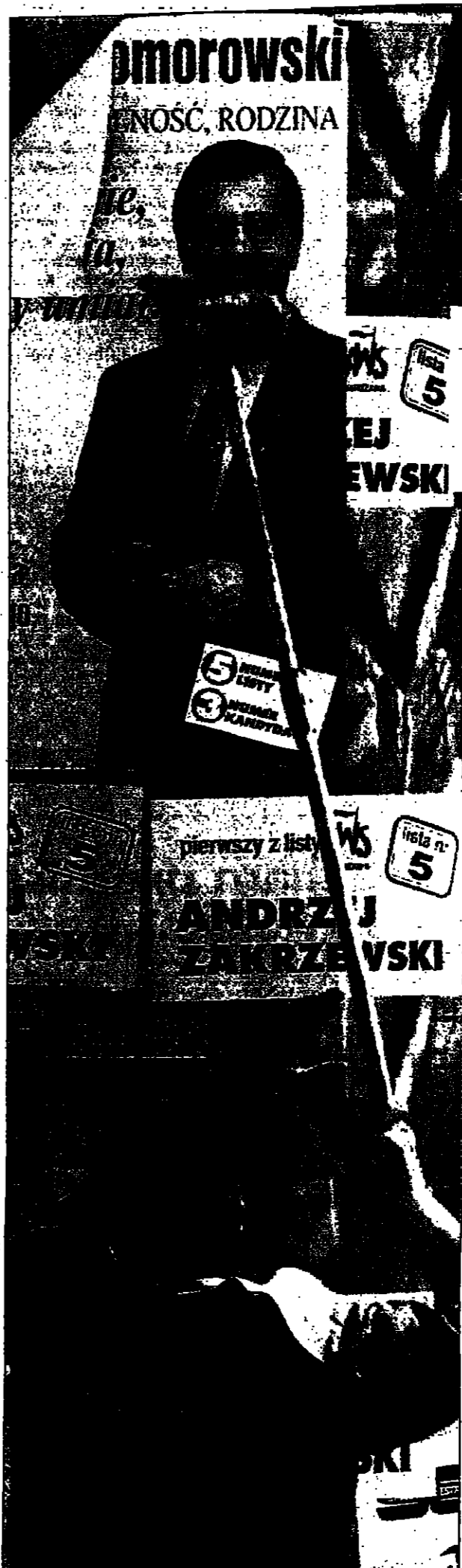
"The most important thing is to get the ex-communists out of power," says the Solidarity spokesman Wojciech Blasiak. "There is corruption in the government; they sell official positions to their friends; they are incompetent."

Whatever the government's flaws, international business appears convinced that the ex-communists are the lesser of the many possible evils on offer. The trade unionists in the nominally right-wing Solidarity alliance worry foreign capitalists

a great deal more than the self-proclaimed leftists in the government, who were applauded by one US agency recently for their effort to turn themselves into a "conservative social democratic party".

Some of the Polish press has gone to great lengths to expose the home-grown Reds, particularly those under the bed, but without much success. Last week a newspaper was forced to eat its words after linking - but not naming - President Alexander Kwasniewski to the KGB. Solidarity's promise to cleanse public life of former secret agents has struck a chord, providing the opposition with a rare area of attack.

Devising a reliable system for spy-catching will be harder than Solidarity pretends. But as ideological differences fade, it pays to maintain the one barrier which still separates the jailers of yesterday from the jailed.



Eye catcher: A worker puts up a poster in Warsaw yesterday for a Solidarity coalition candidate. Photograph: Reuters

Bosnian crash kills diplomat

Sarajevo — The United Nations said 11 people, including a leading German diplomat, were killed when a helicopter slammed into a hill in central Bosnia yesterday. Officials said that Gerd Wagner, the German deputy to Carlos Westendorp, the international High Representative to Bosnia, was among the dead.

Five other passengers were injured in the crash at about 10am, according to the UN spokesman Liam McDowall. A Foreign Office spokeswoman said last night that a British man was reportedly on board, but that his fate was not known.

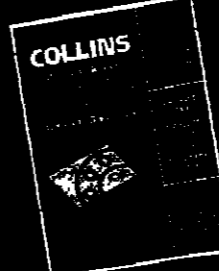
The helicopter, a Ukrainian aircraft hired by the UN mission, took off from Sarajevo at about 9.15am. It was carrying senior officials in the UN mission and other international organisations to talks with local authorities in the town of Bugojno in Bosnia's Muslim-Croat Federation.

The Nato-led peace force said it had sent helicopters to the site of the crash in a mountainous region around Fojnica, about 50km (30 miles) northwest of the capital Sarajevo.

"The search and rescue operation is completed," Mr McDowall said.

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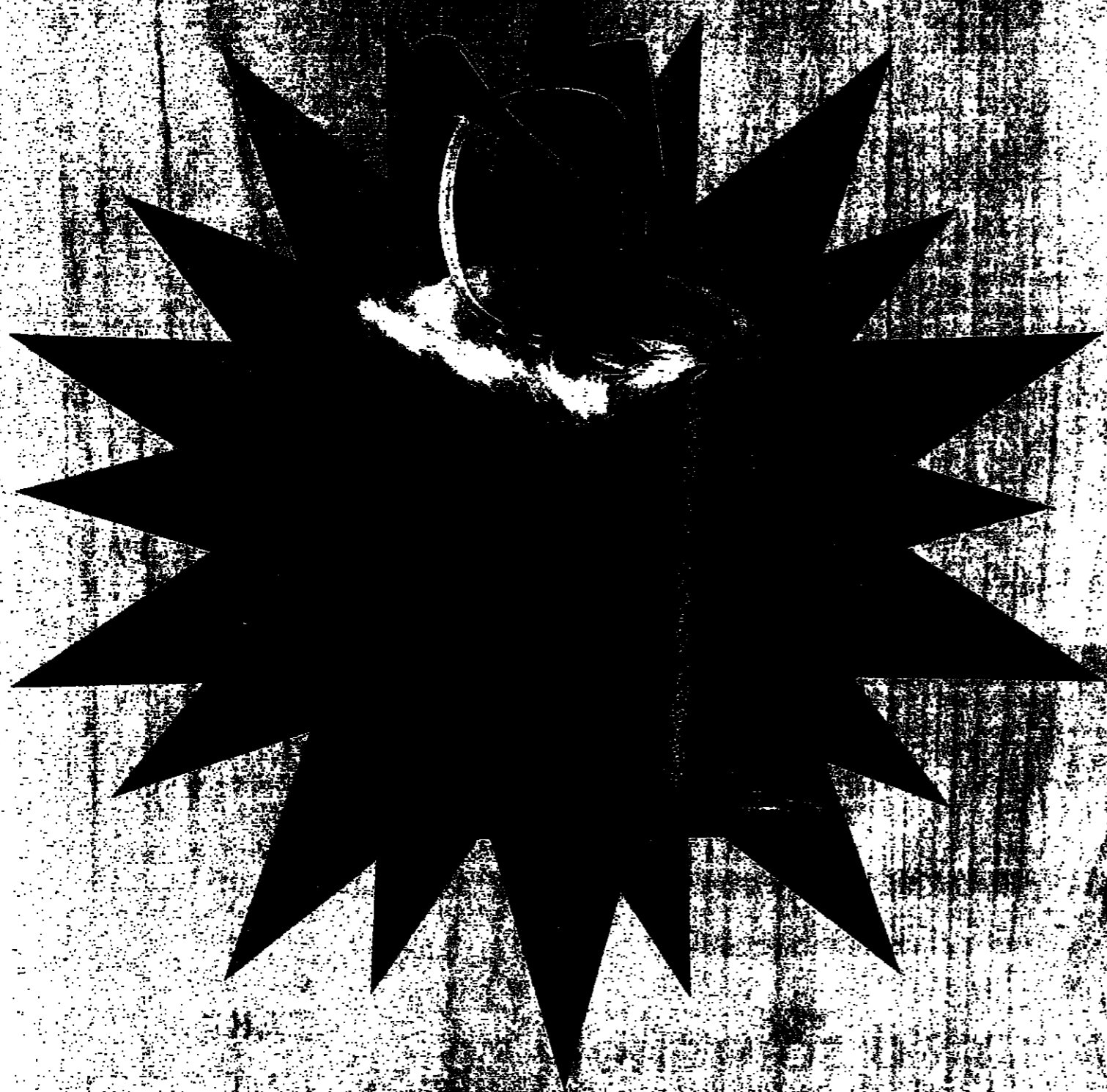
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Before Princess Diana's funeral, few had ever heard of John Tavener. By its close, almost the whole world had heard his 'flights of angels' sing her to her rest. Here the composer of the 'Song for Athene' tells Nicholas Roe how the roots of his music lie in the birth of his brother and the death of his mother

I can see it now. I was three years old. I can see the piano I played and I can see the gramophone player which I also played endlessly, endlessly, endlessly the same music, all the time my mother was in hospital.

I can't see any particular significance in the music itself – it was Humperdinck's 'Brother, Come Dance With Me' from *Hansel and Gretel*; so that isn't important, although when I hear it even nowadays it has a very emotional effect on me. But the fact that I needed music in every form was important.

I was very close to my mother and at that stage I was the only child. My sister had died at birth and my mother had had such enormous difficulty giving birth to me that she nearly lost me.

Because of this, when she had my brother they kept her in hospital for quite some time. But I had no idea why she had had to go away. She had just gone and I told I played the piano all the time or I went back to this gramophone, wound it up and asked for this record to be put on again and again and again.

The ghost or echo I have is music – whether on the wind-up gramophone or the piano, it seemed somehow to comfort me and I remember it so vividly as something like soothing pain.

Later every time I did it, it seemed to soothe pain, and it's only now, at the age of 53, that I can finally understand why. Because I see it as a form of prayer. I might be completely crackers and have got it wrong but that is how it seemed to me.

I feel that the music I write is far ahead of what I am and often the music teaches me something. Does that make sense? It's part of a spiritual journey, and the journey in my case takes place through writing music and it tells me things about my life. The act of writing puts me almost in a trance state, where I feel enormously close to God.

I see this with hindsight, of course. It really became clear to me much later, after my mother died in 1983. But another point of revelation was when the head of the Russian Orthodox Church in England

asked me, in 1974, to make a setting of the liturgy without my knowing anything of the Orthodox tones, or how the services are put together – just to react to the text.

When my version of the liturgy was celebrated, I was pounced on by members of the Orthodox congregation, who said: "You have not written this in the prescribed tone; you have set this to your own music" and it had a paralysing effect on me. I knew they were right but I had to discover why they were right.

It was the discovery of tradition. When I was three, I connected prayer with composing. Now I was realising that there was this thing called sacred music which had nothing to do with Beethoven and Mozart

and nothing to do with this knowledge I thought I had acquired yet was never totally happy with.

I would say that, so far as Western music is concerned, at the end of the Middle Ages when the scientific revolution began, the ego started to come in more and more; music is no longer an act of worship, it starts becoming separate – and I can't bear the concept of art for art's sake. It becomes music for the critics.

When people talk about composition they say, "I think he's finding his own voice." Suddenly that seemed to be ridiculous. It was not a question of finding one's own voice, it was a question of finding the voice. It brings into my thought the ques-

tion that perhaps music does go right back to the beginning of the world, hence the link with the sacred.

Again with hindsight, I can say today that in a way I had to cease to exist as John Tavener.

Then my mother died and the revelation really started to happen. She died of cancer but in a rather wonderful way, because an Orthodox priest was actually in her room and was singing the Office of the Departing of the Human Soul, and at the point of "Amen" she died, which I felt was ... appropriate.

But it stopped me writing. I didn't want to write at all. I went to see an eminent traditionalist who said, "Go to the nature you

love most of all", and that for me was Greece and I did exactly what he told me to do.

I stayed in Aegina in a very small hotel which had been used by Greek contemporary poets, a very unusual hotel with a unique atmosphere.

My intention was not to write, but after about six weeks I found, not against my will exactly, that I was writing and I couldn't stop. It was a kind of pouring out and there was a connection – although I could never have analysed it – between what I had been doing in the Seventies, and what was coming out now. And the music had a new kind of humility. That was very important to me and I worked and prayed my

way out of the grief I felt for my mother.

I was healed by the landscape and also by going to visit the relics of a saint – St Neophytos of Aegina. I remember putting my head on his relics and I heard the words "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also", from the Gospels. I think the point was that I must continue, and must continue writing music because writing music for me is my life and it meant that my life could continue.

The process is going on. Removing formulae, removing any preconceived idea I had about religion or music because I can lump them together. Just allowing something to pass through me. Call it the Holy Spirit, if you like.

Tavener: 'The music I write is far ahead of what I am'

Photograph: PAL

'The music seemed somehow to comfort me, like something soothing pain'

A network of friends can be a better prop than one single bloke



DILEMMAS
VIRGINIA
IRONSIDE

Sally's husband left her eight months ago and despite seeing lots of friends she feels unbearably lonely, unable even to buy food if it's not for two. She also longs for sexual physical contact. Will she have to wait till she finds another man, any man?

Feeling lonely is part of bereavement. It doesn't matter how many friends you have, you

may still feel lonely. When my father died, I burst into tears and was comforted by my partner. "But I feel so lonely!" I wailed. He snatched his arms away. "But you've got me!" he replied, hurt. What he didn't understand is that the loneliness following a bereavement is something that stands on its own, unrelated to reality. And the break-up of a relationship is indeed a bereavement, made worse, in Sally's case, by the fact that she was the one who was actually left.

Some people argue that eventually the feelings of lone-

liness will go and Sally will find it great fun being on her own. She will go round supermarkets buying scrummy meals for one, tiny treats of minuscule pots of caviar which she will eat with a tiny spoon as she watches the video of her choice or channel-hops to her heart's content. She will go to exhibitions and museums by herself and at her own pace. She will be able to wake up at three in the morning and fall asleep over a book with the light on.

I've never reached this blissful state, and, like Sally, relieve

feelings of loneliness by surrounding myself with gangs of people. But what Sally will find, after a long time, is that her friends turn into a net of security, and she will find that this giant network is just as much of a prop, if not more so, than one single bloke.

To build this network, however, she must relate to her friends on an emotional level as well as a social one. But there are plenty of people to help her sublimate her feelings of loneliness. Gays, girlfriends, children, lonely single or divorced men looking for a spot of moth-

ering rather than sex – the world is bursting with them.

Sally misses sex, but the problem with sex is that the longing is never-ending, like cleaning your teeth. You can't just have a whole heap of sex and then not want it for a year. But the desire for sex is yet another symptom of bereavement, when sexual feelings can go haywire.

Some women who've been left simply cringe at the idea of being touched by a man; other women get obsessed by it, and can hardly go into the baker's without giving him the

eye and wondering what he'd be like between the sheets or, indeed, in more interesting places.

It may be that Sally's right and she misses a man, "any man" as she puts it, for his sheer maleness around the house. A personality is not like a kettle – you can't go to the shop and buy another one – but the maleness of a man is rather like a kettle and in that way any man, as long as he is kind and attractive to her, will do. There's no shame in that. Many men primarily want a woman round the house, long before

they want "this particular" woman or "that special" lady. This is why people get together via lonely hearts columns, which might well be an answer for Sally, though not so early on in the game.

Sally's real problem is that she is looking for relief from her pain so quickly. She doesn't say how long she was married, but seven months is no time at all. After a 16-year relationship it's been two years until I've felt remotely human again. Sally, too, will feel human again, but it will take far longer than she thinks.

WHAT READERS SAY

You will get through this in time

Having experienced Sally's feelings of loneliness I can understand how she feels. Waves of depression would engulf me, leaving me physically incapable of doing anything. Like her I had a full life socially. For a few years, though I admitted it to no one, I longed for a man, someone who would love me and whom I could love. But, having a fatalist side to my nature, I never actively looked for one. I learnt that one always came through the bleak periods supported by family and friends. I got to know myself well.

I brought the children up, made a new life for myself and was really enjoying my independence when, whoops, along came someone – totally unexpected! I've had to make further adjustments as I was becoming selfish!

My loneliness/adjustment to divorce took me seven years, but it's different for everyone so live a day at a time. I remarried 14 years later.

To Sally I say, lean on your friends but spread yourself or you risk the friendship; realise that life will get better even if you don't believe it, and take what there is to offer because there is a time and a season for everything – never lose hope.

Cleone Auger
Henley-on-Thames, Oxfordshire

One day you will fall in love again

My ex had an affair while I was working away, struggling to keep our home. I was overcome with hurt and bitterness. This was a woman whose father I had nursed and was with when he died.

I failed to find some meaning or reason. My feelings ranged from anger to loneliness

to despair. I was ready to hit the next person who said: "Time is a great healer." But it is. Keep busy – let your friends comfort you – things will get better.

Two years on I had recovered my self-worth, was enjoying my freedom and looking forward to life on my own. I was at peace with myself, then I fell in love with the most wonderful woman. We are now married with a baby on the way.

The time was right. You'll know when it is for you.

John Harbourne
Cmsby, Liverpool

Being married can be far lonelier

The loneliness will go, although you may hardly notice it happening. My husband left me five years ago and I too felt desolate, but it now seems like a distant memory.

You might find that braving more time on your own will

help you to come to terms with your situation. I couldn't go out much when my husband first left because I had two small children. I spent a lot of time with friends or colleagues during the day, but I was usually on my own in the evenings. After a while, I found that I really appreciated this quiet time to myself – reading, pottering or just doing nothing. It seemed to help me regain my sense of self. Five years on I still have no man in my life, nice though that might be, but I am happier and less lonely than I now realise I was in my marriage.

Flora Jamieson
London SE24

Pain is part of the healing process

Having gone through the same experience as your reader – I've been in the situation where, yes, you can be in a crowded room and, yes, you can even appear

NEXT WEEK'S DILEMMA:

Dear Virginia, I am in a very responsible job in a small firm and have been given increasing responsibility over the years. It suits me perfectly because it's down the road and my boss is very understanding about letting me always go early enough to pick my son up from school, and allows me time off for school events and so on. I always make up any work I miss by popping in some Saturdays, however. He will also allow me to work from home if my son is ill, which, admittedly, is hardly ever. My problem is that I have been working for the same salary for the last 10 years and feel I deserve a rise, particularly as I've just discovered that a woman's been taken on in a far less senior position and is being paid almost half as much again as me. I just find it almost impossible to screw up the courage to ask. What is wrong with me? My husband says I'm being taken advantage of.

Hattie

Comments are welcome, and everyone who has a suggestion quoted will be sent a bouquet from Interflora. Send personal experiences or comments to me at the Features Department, *The Independent*, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5DL (fax 0171-293-2182) by Tuesday morning. If you have any dilemmas of your own you would like to share, let me know.

The inventions that win favour in a Blairite vision of the Millennium

Yesterday Tony Blair went on television to launch the Millennium Products collection chosen by the Design Council to promote the best of British talent for the 21st century. Products had to have been manufactured between January 1995 and the end of 1997. Here Nonie Niesewand surveys the first 27 products announced in a list which will eventually comprise 2,000.

On the evidence of the first 1 per cent, the exhibition comes with attitude that is very politically correct and environmentally aware. There is an Oxfam bucket being field tested in Botswana; nothing flashy but an indication that water is going to be a key issue in the 21st century; and the Grippa, a plumber's tool designed to seal leaks. There is a low-tech building (pictured and described on the right), good-looking but no more than that. It was chosen because it pioneers energy saving techniques so dear to the heart of this government. There's a life

raft with a chute which frees itself the minute a ship starts to tilt; laser coded cabling on aircraft that makes maintenance much safer and easier; a pest control device for farmers that reduces that need for environmentally damaging crop spraying. This is not a fun list; the only thing for children is for disabled children. Those who think of the Design Council as a promoter of gadgets and gifts will learn that when Millennium thinking takes hold, the fact that Britain's leadership electronics and technology looms larger than souvenirs.

Water
• Grippa stops water mains springing a leak with a plastic pipeline adaptor in three sizes to link all household pipes to the water mains. So many variations in plumbing into the mains means that plumbers carry 20 fittings for each repair.
Grippa Universal Pipeline Adaptor - Products designed by Ists

• On field trial in Botswana, the Oxfam water bucket with a snap-on, no-spill lid plus cap and nozzle is conceived to carry on the head. In air-lifts, it stacks for food storage on flight.
Oxfam Water Container

Energy
• A horizontal land gas drilling system reaches parts that other drill bits could not reach. Up to five miles from the rig, the fully rotating head effectively drills around corners to stop oil and gas fields closing down too early. Now it's being tested to extend 10 miles from the rig.
Swerveable Rotary Drilling - Camco International (UK)

Eco-friendly
• Crop spraying needs careful controls since it affects the environment. Pest lifecycles are determined by temperature and the short pocket-sized Tempest lights up when conditions are ripe for a plague.
Tempest - Insect Investigations



Fashion: wood-fibre Tencel fabric

• The Helicon building has triple glazing with motorised movable louvre blinds between double glazing to cool the façade. Chilled ceilings between every floor replace air conditioning.
Helicon Building by Ove Arup

Medicine
• Seaweed dressing with polymer film replaces skin. Absorbent, transparent.



Medicine: the Woosh Chair

alginate seaweed extractions convert to a gel for removal, without tearing healing tissue, and if the wound is wet the breathable polymer reacts to dry it and maintains moisture levels.
Intelligent Wound Dressing - ITG

• Surgical gloves go green if they are punctured to alert surgeons.
RI/GEL Reveal - Regent Medical

• Artificial limbs with a tiny computer

chip inside adjust the amputee's painfully learnt swing of an artificial leg to their former gait.
IP + by Charles Blanchford & Sons Ltd



Water: the Oxfam bucket

• Bright, curvy Woosh chair for disabled children is static and can be modified at low cost for special needs.
Woosh Chair - Lecky Design Ltd

• Contact lenses that keep the eye moist for longer are made of bio-compatible phosphorylcholine (PC), which is found in blood cells and stops protein adhering. PC catheters are less likely to become infected just as PC stents prop up damaged arteries.
Proclear Contact Lenses - Biocom

• Cowslip is a recyclable plastic overshoe which comes in two pairs for dairy cows with aching legs. They alleviate pain to increase milk yield and effect a cure for tired legs in a month.
Cowslips - Gillspur Scientific

Fashion

• The first new man-made fibre for 30 years. Made from sustainable wood fibre, unlike the crackly, shiny nylon and rayon, Tencel from Courtaulds drapes well, colours intensely and is durable.
Tencel - Courtaulds

Transport

• The Rolls-Royce Trent Engine is 1½ tons lighter than its rivals. Fan blades made from titanium rather than carbon fibre make it the world's lightest, strongest and most powerful aircraft engine in the world. These weight loss winners allow each aircraft to carry up to 30 more passengers.
Trent Engine - Rolls-Royce

• The all-weather road and rail bridge in Hong Kong links the island with the new airport and stays open even in typhoons.
Lantau Link - Mott MacDonald

• Life rafts with chutes attached are blown clear of containers in emergencies when a ship is in distress. Huge crowds are evacuated down chutes into the attached catchnet of a raft.
Martin-Ark Marine Evacuation System - RFD

• Fail-safe laser labelling for military and commercial aeroplanes uses ultraviolet to change the colour indelibly on hundreds of miles of cabling.
Capris 50 UV Laser Wire Marker - Spectrum Technologies Ltd

Information Technology

• Forget PIN numbers. Just as no two fingerprints are the same, no two iris-eyes are identical. Now automatic telling machines can identify by their eyes anybody wanting to withdraw cash. The machine also issues everything from money and airline tickets to information on the video screen.
Persona S ATM - NCR Financial Systems Ltd

• Shoppers at Safeways get a handheld rod with their trolley which scans purchases and tots up the bill before check-out.
Shop & Go - Safeway Stores

• The new mega byted Psion series 5 is a more powerful palm-top computer with a keyboard and touch-sensitive screen which can write documents, create spreadsheets, make diary entries, access e-mail and track share prices.
Psion Series 5

• BT already has 200 public Internet booths open in London like phone boxes offering 20 channels of news, sport, weather and leisure activity with interactive access.
BT Touchpoint

• The London stock exchange's 200-year-old monopoly is broken by an automatic transaction service conducted online, real-time, by computer rather than by telephone, without a broker.
Tradepoint Financial Networks

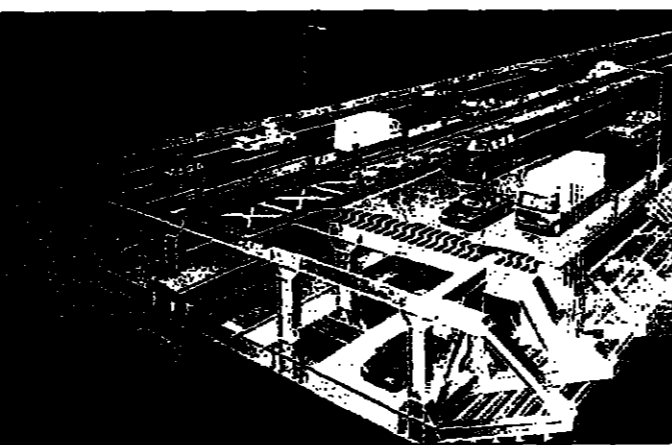
• The world's smallest camera attached to your PC means you can video-conference the world.
Universal Serial Bus Camera - Vision

Entertainment

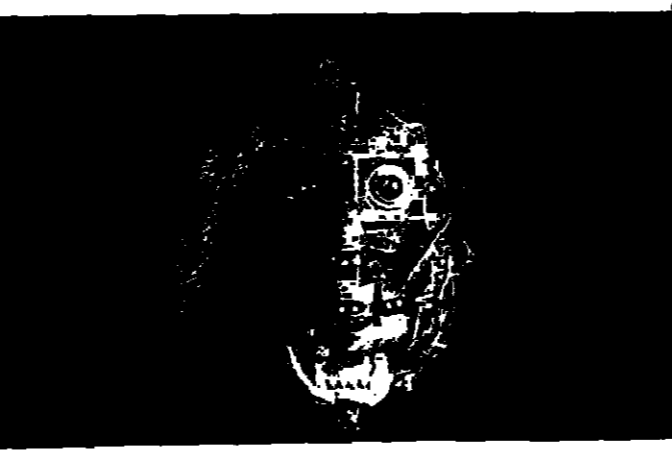
• Fibre-optic cables can beam into your home multiple channels. But accessing them is expensive. This new silicon transceiver reduces costs by translating light data into digital information.
ASOC Optical Fibre Transceivers - Bookham Technology

• Could you spot the real Dalmanites from the fakes in 101 Dalmanites? Animatronics hide a person inside an animal costume to manipulate hand and body movements while, off screen, a puppeteer with a joystick changes expressions. Creature Shop created Babe, the pig, out of computer graphics with animatronics and now they're building Buddy the gorilla.
Buddy - Jim Henson's Creature Shop

• Mobile phones can access personalised information via the Internet. Genie bleeps to alert the user to share price changes, broadcast bulletins, job vacancies, TV listings and so on.
Genie - Cellnet

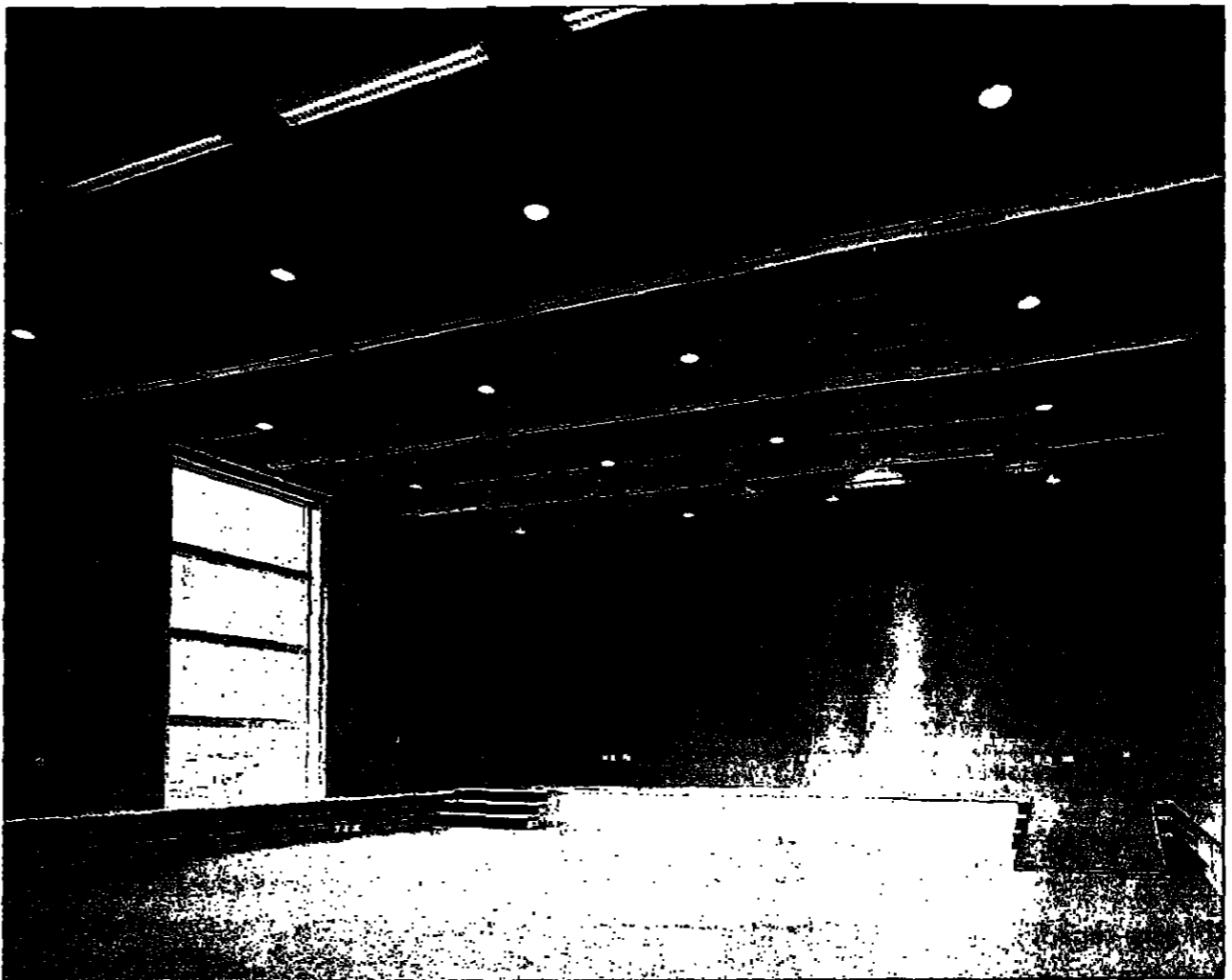


Transport: Lantau Bridge in Hong Kong



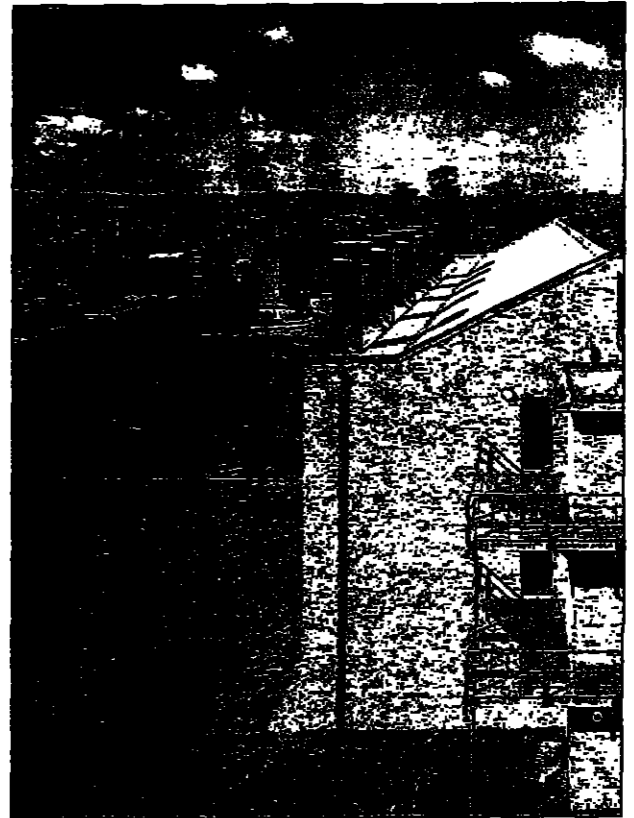
Entertainment: Buddy - Animatronics

• Run with the dinosaurs on screen with a CD-Rom, starring a giant 3D Tyrannosaurus Rex, which animates dinosaurs and stages a virtual dig to excavate bones which come to life and wait in ambush. Internet links allow the curious to question top palaeontologists. Dinosaur sounds can be downloaded.
Eyewitness VR Dinosaur Hunter - DK Multimedia



Above: low-tech eco-efficient offices and seminar space for 100 people. Below left: the south-facing glazed façade has a solar panel to store enough sunlight to light the office throughout the year. External motorised translucent glass louvres control glare. Below right: recycled materials are important, so old bricks were used - a problem, as they were sized in imperial measurements and the architects' floor plans were metric

Photographs: Dennis Gilbert



They dropped bricks on the road to efficiency

Building 16, a new addition to the Design Council's millennial list, is a model for energy efficient office buildings of the future. Utilising natural energy sources, it could prove to be an architectural milestone - but only time will tell.

Building 16 is as energy-efficient an office building as Britain can offer, or so the Design Council hopes. They have put it on their millennial list, but in truth they don't really know whether it works or not. By the time the millennium comes, we will know. Still, it is a three-storeyed building, to be found at the Building Research Establishment at Watford, designed by the Bath practice of Fielden & Clegg to provide "a 30 per cent better energy performance than previous buildings".

It is supposed to be state-of-the-art, and it probably is, but it must be said that the story of its construction had its unstate-of-the-art moments. There was a major glitch at the start: imperial-sized bricks and metric floor plans - and this for BRE, the UK's leading source of independent advice and information on building performance, construction and fire safety.

The bricks were imperial measure because the intention was that it would be built from old bricks recycled - 20,000 of them from the demolished building on the site. But the Portland cement that bonded them meant that nobody could separate them. A crusher had to pulverise them on site. Other salvaged bricks were ordered, finding the right quantity from the same site to ensure continuity of finish and colour. They were found, transported at a cost, and the architects' charges rose with each redesign; as did the main contractor's, due to the care and cutting required in the brick-laying to fit the imperial bricks into a metric building frame.

As for the rest, the on-site recycling did happen. Slate cladding, roofing sheets and cast-iron drains were salvaged from the demolition of a building on site. Roofing timbers were sold to a pine furniture maker, and all the fittings inside, such as fire extinguishers, blinds, light-switches and sockets, were distributed to schools and hospitals.

According to the Building Research Centre, the hassle over the old bricks was worthwhile. The manufacture of new bricks causes environmental dam-

age, which was averted. Besides, the reclaimed bricks give a mellowed character to the building. But, as they put it, they learnt that "greater insight is needed in the role of the reclamation industry in the UK".

So how does the building work? It is designed to harness the sun, the wind and water. When the south-facing, glazed façade is bathed in sunlight, inside it is cool. A borehole was sunk 70 feet to pipe cold water throughout the three levels. This groundwater pumped from the borehole as a cooling source is more efficient with a waveform construction of flooring, an organic form which provides interesting ceilings on the floor below. In winter, this water will be heated for underfloor heating, and piped into radiators. Mike Clift, project manager, admits that monitoring the success of this natural air-conditioning with airflow and temperature controls has just begun.

Any breeze is captured by cross-ventilation, a natural choice for the open-plan arrangements. The shallow office plan with fairly high glazed façades means that there is plenty of daylight indoors, and BMS-controlled windows on the third floor, with manually opened windows at lower levels, allow for cross-ventilation. Occupants can override the automatic control of all aspects of their environments; for the architects, this is "a most important issue for any building and one which a naturally ventilated building should address more effectively than a sealed box".

On the outside of the south-facing façade there are external motorised glass louvres and fan-assisted ventilation stacks, so on hot, still days fans inside will circulate the air through the offices. A small, thin film of silicone panels are photovoltaic, to store enough heat to light the building. In the summer the fire research unit was using this solar power to boil kettles for tea but these photovoltaic conditions are expected to generate 1,500 kilowatt-hours a year, enough to light the building. The new generation of compact low-energy fluorescent tubes, T5, are more efficient than conventional fluorescent tubes and less environmentally damaging in manufacture. They are linked to presence detectors and to the BMS computer system, which switches off the lights when they are not needed.

It sounds like a building for the millennium, doesn't it? Let's hope it winters well.

20/LEADER & LETTERS

Top jobs with tough responsibilities merit top salaries



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Few calculations are based on such pseudo-science and false analogy as those which produce the salaries of "top people". In the private sector, remuneration committees sit around pretending to be objective when in fact they are working on hunches, the going rate and vague intuitions about individuals and returns. In the public sector, the work is farmed out to committees of the Great and Good who try, usually in vain, to find someone whose job really compares with that of an army general or the Cabinet Secretary. But lack of rigorous principle is not the same as the absence of a strong case for paying those in senior positions well. Like the Prime Minister, this is an incomparable job, for which £140,000 a year by no means sounds too much but £90,000 certainly sounds too little.

The pay system bequeathed to Labour by its Tory predecessors this week produced new numbers for the Prime Minister and Cabinet colleagues. The

resulting salaries are reasonable. For the Home Secretary to receive £120,000 or so a year is fitting. It is a demanding job, carries physical risks and may only last a matter of months. Those points apply even more strongly to the premiership. In an ideal world, we might wish there to be tighter definitions of ministers' jobs, making clear just where their responsibilities end and those of the managers they employ in the public services begin. But such fuzziness is no excuse for meanness.

Cabinet ministers deserve the money even when nurses and doctors and teachers are being kept to increases at or around the rate of inflation. Through a mixture of parliamentary pusillanimity and Conservative cowardice, ministerial pay is now depressed. There is a good case for a one-off upwards adjustment of Cabinet salaries which need not have any ramifications for those working in schools or hospitals or collecting refuse.

One of the best legacies of the

Conservative era was the conviction that pay has to follow performance. If the phrase "pay policy" is to mean anything at all, it must no longer be the doctrine of the annual round where everyone gets some inflation plus increment plucked out of the air by trade union leaders; instead it must be based on schemes which seek to reward those who perform their jobs well and increase the public product as a result. Even nurses are not all star performers; their pay must also recognise individual merit as well as local circumstances of recruitment.

Frightened of confrontation with a branch of trade unionism which the industrial relations revolution of the Eighties seems to have passed by, governments in the past have usually chosen not to deliver this message to public employees directly, preferring to hide behind pay review bodies. These are merely a deception, for a reason graphically illustrated yesterday. The Government made it plain before the

election that its spending plans for the next two years are those fixed by Kenneth Clarke last November. Those plans envisage an increase in aggregate public sector pay of little more than inflation.

Alistair Darling - a minister, incidentally, emerging as one of this administration's brighter lights - repeated this fiscal fact yesterday, directing his voice towards the pay review bodies. How dare he, stormed Sandy Macara, chairman of the British Medical Association - "The review body should do [its job] quite unfettered by affordability." That is the authentic voice of the Seventies, the decade which brought us discontented winters and the mentality which says public services are not for the benefit of the public but for those who provide them.

Tony Blair is wrong to have foregone a rise in prime ministerial salary, but sometimes political circumstances are too strong to resist - and this was such an occasion. Given Cherie Booth's professional

success, it is hard to see the Blair household missing the odd £10,000 (however unfair that observation, it would get made). Mr Blair's next move, to urge his Cabinet colleagues to take their rise, was correct. They now merely look like sheep.

Those mistakes made, the Government needs more than ever to reaffirm its public sector pay policy for 1997-98. It is this. Spending plans do allow some small rise in aggregate pay. That, however, must first be used to meet the Government's stated priority, which is the rescue and rehabilitation of the education service. A key instrument is differential reward, allowing, for example, good teachers to stay in the classroom, well paid and not sucked into administration and pastoral work which, however important, have to remain secondary to lively teaching. David Blunkett's authority to push that policy would in no way have been diminished by his accepting an amount nearer the proper pay for a minister of his standing.

Post letters to Letters to the Editor
and include a daytime telephone number.
Fax 0171 293 2056; e-mail: letters@independent.co.uk
E-mail correspondents are asked to give a postal address.
Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

LETTERS

Efficient recycling

Sir: Ray Palin, director of the Energy from Waste Association is right to point out (Letters, 17 September) the overriding need to reduce waste, but wrong to champion the waste incineration option. Incinerators are complex technology. They cost millions to set up and so the operators require very long waste supply contracts (25-30 years) to justify the huge outlay. Moreover, Coopers & Lybrand's recent report to the EC found that incineration creates less employment than recycling, requires more transport (generating extra carbon dioxide), and undermines recycling.

Germany is some years ahead of Britain in recycling waste - their problems today could be our problems in five years. They are now recycling efficiently to such an extent that their waste volumes have decreased by 16 per cent in the three years after 1990.

To prevent their expensive incinerators lying idle they are now forced to import waste from as far away as Brazil to keep their incinerators operating. Landfill sites are still required for the remnant toxic incinerator ash.

Meanwhile, here in the UK, a report in the current issue of *The Ecologist* highlights the poor safety performance of some British municipal incinerators as well as the dangers to health associated with the dioxins produced by the incineration process. On economic, environmental and health grounds, incineration - even when opportunistically renamed "energy from waste" - is not a viable option. We should seek instead to drastically reduce waste, promote recycling and reuse, while developing small and safe composting and anaerobic digestion systems.
Dr DAVID CROMWELL
Southampton, Hampshire

Sir: We welcome Polly Tynbee's support for recycling (15 September) but take issue with her opinion of "price-fixing glass makers" who "in their greed to pay the lowest possible prices in the short term are throttling recycling schemes at birth".

The glass industry has been committed to recycling for over 20 years and has invested over £1m in the national bottle bank network. This yields over



430,000 tons of recovered and recycled glass every year. Glass accounts for over 70 per cent of all recycled domestic packaging in the UK and the bottle bank system here, and in Europe, has been proven to be far the most efficient and least costly way of collecting used glass containers.

The green plastic box which prompted Ms Tynbee's article represents a vastly more expensive way of collecting waste. Furthermore the doorstep method is in its infancy and will have to develop massively before it can collect the volumes of recycled packaging that are needed to meet Government goals. The glass industry is committed to increasing the amount of glass collected via bottle banks and is working to organise the funding of new bottle bank sites and equipment.
BILL COOK
Director General
British Glass
Sheffield

Sir: Polly Tynbee's assertion that recycling can be a viable and profitable initiative makes good sense, especially given her acknowledgement that using recycled newspaper is cheaper than using new wood pulp.

Why is it, then, that recycled paper is so much more expensive to buy in the shops? Are the manufacturers cashing in on those of us with an environmental conscience?
NIGEL GOODWIN
University of Nottingham

Ford dispute

Sir: Those who have been following coverage in *The Independent* of the recognition dispute at Ford of Dagenham, occasioned by some 300 drivers in the truck fleet transferring from the Transport & General Workers Union to UXTU, may be forgiven for thinking that racism is the root cause.

In an article by Barrie

Clement (11 September) you reported: "While the proportion of ethnic minority workers in the main factories at Dagenham is between 40 and 50 per cent, the proportion in the truck fleet is around 2 per cent".

The statistics are used to infer that the disparity is virtual proof of racial discrimination, whereas the low percentage of ethnic minority drivers simply reflects the proportion of ethnic minority drivers found in the LGV driver population of the UK as a whole.

Your report also signally failed to mention that the TUC Disputes Committee completely cleared UXTU of any suggestion of racism, just as it also cleared them of having directly recruited TGWU members.
DOUGLAS CURTIS
Head of Campaigns and Communications
The United Road Transport Union
Sirensall, Yorkshire

Jewish faith

Sir: Your article about the hatred and violence directed against Reform Jews in Israel by their ultra-Orthodox co-religionists (13 September) will have disturbed and saddened many of your readers, Jew and non-Jew alike.

It is hardly surprising that many secular Jerusalemites are seeking to escape the intolerance of the Orthodox by leaving the city to find homes in areas where they can live as they choose.

The burning of the kindergarten in Mevasseret Zion is, however, rooted in a different problem. It stems from the refusal of the Orthodox to accept the principle of pluralism in Israel, as indeed they refuse to accept it in the Jewish community in the United Kingdom.

Progressive Jews in Israel and elsewhere are not "secular" Jews, they are as deeply com-

mitted to their religion and its traditions as are the Orthodox; they simply choose to practise it in a way that synthesises an ancient faith with modernity.
Rabbi Dr CHARLES H. MIDDLEBURY
Director Designate
Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues
London W1

Night flight noise

Sir: I am astonished at the finding of BAA's "expert" (report, 15 September) that people's sleep is not affected by night flights into Heathrow.

I live in Herne Hill, London, some 16 miles from Heathrow. My household is almost daily awoken by aircraft on their way to Heathrow around 6am, already flying so low that the aircraft numbers can often be identified. The volume of traffic has already become a real public nuisance.

Terminal 5 should not be built. Heathrow is a mess as it is; it is a horrible airport to use. If the majority of flight users are on transfers, then these could be accomplished at an airport well away from the centre of population in London.
GRAHAM FEAKINS
London SE24

Welsh spoken here

Sir: Judith Judd states ("Learning Welsh can help with your maths", 13 September) that Welsh is "a language which, not long ago, was spoken mainly by poets and peasants".

Welsh is spoken by 80 per cent of the population of the old county of Gwynedd and 60 per cent of Ceredigion. They have not learnt it overnight, so to which category does your correspondent believe they belong?
STEVE BARBER
Beeston, Nottinghamshire

Greenham hijacked

Sir: Both Julian Lewis (Letters, 16 September) and the Greenham women seem to have missed the point of the ceremony to take down a part of the fence around Greenham Common last weekend.

Whether you agree with the Greenham women that their protests ended the Cold War or with Mr Lewis that deployment of nuclear forces was the cause, or indeed with many others that the real reason was the triumph of capitalism over Communism as an economic system, the removal of nuclear weapons from Greenham happened many years ago and was not relevant to the weekend's ceremony.

Instead, what we were doing was celebrating the success of Newbury District Council in achieving a transfer of the Greenham and Crookham Commons into their ownership. The negotiations were carried out between the new Greenham Common Trust, the district council and the Ministry of Defence. The Greenham women played no part in these negotiations and the Government was the main cause of the negotiations being so prolonged.

It is a sad reflection of the desperate need for good publicity of both the protesters and the Conservative Party that both should have tried to hijack what was really a people's triumph achieved through their local council.
DAVID RENDEL MP
(Lib Dem, Newbury)
House of Commons
London SW1

'Independent' views

Sir: Don't like it. Full marks to you for being innovative. But you've gone in entirely the wrong direction. Too magaziney.

KEITH HUDSON
Bath

Sir: Warm congratulations on the new look *Independent*, admirable in form and content. May it go from strength to strength.
ANNE SERRAILLIER
Chichester, Sussex

Sir: *The Independent* has changed... but I still have black hands by the time I have read it.
J RAVENSCROFT
London N11

In which the brains of British quizmasters are even more challenged



MILES KINGSTON

I seem to have started quite a hare running when I wondered out loud if anyone apart from me had ever noticed TV and radio quizmasters getting things wrong. Readers sent me enough samples of mistakes perpetrated by the snug brotherhood of quiz chairmen to fill a whole column yesterday and, blow me down, there is enough in the post this morning to do it again. I cannot resist the temptation.

A card, first, from John Handford of Gosport, who says he once heard Henry Kelly on *Going for Gold* ask a man from Hamburg: "From what language does the expression Zeiteist come?" Unfortunately, he pronounced the expression as "Zeetgeest" and the poor

German was none the wiser. Margaret Thompson of Chessington reports that 10 years ago on Radio 4's *Brain of Britain* she heard an embarrassed female contestant being asked by a male quizmaster: "Where in the human body do you find the perineum?"

Now, even I knew this one. The perineum is that small blank space situated between the anal back area and the genital front area. I always think of it as the one part of the body which, when you are having a shower, is sure to retain quantities of soapy foam after you thought you had rinsed it all off, but apparently it also comes into play during childbirth, which explained the contestant's tongue-tied dithering.

"Sorry," said the quizmaster, "but I must give the answer. It's the membrane in the abdomen that covers the intestines."

Nothing of the sort, says Margaret Thompson - that's the perineum.

Raymond Cook of no fixed abode (ie, via e-mail) insists that he recently heard Jeremy Paxman on *University Challenge* ascribe the authorship of "A Shropshire Lad" to John Betjeman, instead of the rather more correct AE Housman, and that none of the contestants was knowledgeable enough to contradict him. In a later programme contestants were asked to identify a quotation about architecture, and when someone suggested John Betjeman, Paxman snapped: "He was a poet,

not an architect!" Well, as Mr Cook suggests, if you think Betjeman wrote "A Shropshire Lad", you probably aren't too aware of Betjeman's frequent writings on architecture.

Paul Barnett, from somewhere else in e-mail country, says he heard a contestant on *Brain of Britain* give a perfectly correct answer and have it smugly dismissed by Robert Robinson as wrong. At the end of the programme the continuity person announced that in fact the contestant's answer had been right, but that it hadn't affected the outcome.

"Actually," says Paul Barnett, "I thought it bloody well might have. If I'd been that man, my mind would have been a churn with confusion and/or fury for

the rest of the session, so that I would forget all sorts of things I would normally remember."

Sebastian Robinson of Glasgow has a wonderfully esoteric example of an error by the same chairman on the same programme. "Robert Robinson," he says, "began by announcing: 'The words of this popular song were written by Mitchell Parish. Who wrote the music?' He then played the introductory verse to 'Stardust'. None of the contestants having been able to answer, he then said, 'Hoagy Carmichael' - which, as you will know, is wrong. Carmichael wrote and published the chorus of 'Stardust' as a medium-fast number in about 1928; about three years later Mitchell Parish thought it would make an ex-

cellent slow ballad, and wrote not only the words but the music of the verse, as played by R. Robinson. This must be one of those rare occasions when a quizmaster, having given his victims the right answer, asked them for the wrong one."

And finally a letter from Mr Walter of Westcliff-on-Sea, who was actually a victim of error himself, on *Television Brain of Britain*, a precursor of *Mastermind* in the late Sixties.

"The question (put not to me but to another contestant called Marshbanks) was: 'Which is the lightest planet?' It will be apparent to you, as it was to Mr Marshbanks and myself, that this is slightly ambiguous. Should we understand 'lightest' literally (ie, 'least mas-

sive') in which case the answer is Mercury, or loosely ('least dense') in which case it is Saturn? Marshbanks played safe and asked: 'Do you really mean lightest?' He was told 'yes', and said correctly 'Mercury' and you can guess the rest. Marshbanks would have let it go but I protested and demanded that he be given the point."

Mr Walter himself was later asked to form the letter H in semaphore which he did correctly, only to be told it was wrong. Walter insisted he was right. The voice of the producer was heard backstage: "He's right, you know!" The error was not broadcast, and the programme was dropped after one series. I was not, says Mr Walter, altogether surprised.

Why my blo
was bad for t



POLLY
TOYNBEE
ON TV AND
MARRIAGE

Sweet pictures of

JOHN
WALSH



Why my blow for women was bad for the poor



POLLY TOYNBEE
ON TAX AND MARRIAGE

If you really want to think the unthinkable, then sometimes you have to admit you were wrong. I admit it. When I campaigned for separate taxation for women, I was wrong. (But more of that later on).

Gordon Brown is looking for a big idea. In search of one, he put Martin Taylor of Barclays Bank in charge of a tax and benefit task force. Its ambitious remit is to streamline the system, to increase work incentives, reduce poverty and strengthen community and family life. The dream is to find a way of integrating tax and benefits, creating a smooth transition from one to the other, ironing out work disincentives and social stigma as it goes.

It is, however, a fiendish conundrum, a Holy Grail (or maybe fool's gold) that has eluded many sharp Tory brains who had almost precisely the same intentions. There they go again, rediscovering the same old see-saw, every bright idea balanced by an equally heavy downside.

In his budget speech the Chancellor seized hold of an American scheme called Earned Income Tax Credits. He ordered the task force to consider it and he has been plugging it ever since. Now many fear that he may push it through because it sounds good, despite its many drawbacks.

The idea is to build work incentives into the income tax system. Currently Family Credit is the work-incentive benefit: it tops up low pay, ensuring it's always worthwhile to work, even in a low-paid job. Brown's idea is to transfer that into the tax system, calling it a "tax credit" to make it more socially acceptable to claim.

But, amid growing alarm at Brown's enthusiasm, the notion is getting an emphatic thumbs-down from all the experts. It would bring a huge administrative upheaval for very little good effect: there is little evidence of social stigma against claiming Family Credit, since its take-up is now more than 80 per cent.

Turning the benefit into a tax credit would have deep drawbacks. Instead of the benefit being paid out in the usual way, employers would have to operate the scheme, hugely adding to the complexity of PAYE. Employees wanting to claim would have to give to their bosses details of their lives, partners, children and savings – hardly a popular move. Employers would have to assess the information, pass it on, and then hand over the extra cash, instead of just collecting the tax in the usual way – tough on their time and their cash flow.

It would risk making employers keenly aware of how to take unfair advantage of Family Credit, by paying low wages and hiring only staff who qualified for the benefit. At the moment, employers are largely ignorant of it, because it does not pass through their hands. Worst of all, Family Credit would be transferred into the hus-

band's pay packet, and no longer be paid to the wife. Yet the research suggests that more money is spent on children when paid to the mother, not the father.

Tax credit is an idea whose time has come – and gone – in the space of a few short months. But the Taylor committee will still need a big idea, because Gordon Brown needs a big idea. Here, then, is a big one, but it really does mean thinking the unthinkable. It means thinking again about women and men in the tax and benefits system.

First, I will admit that I and a large number of women who campaigned for separate taxation for husbands and wives were wrong. Introduced in 1990, this feminist move gave married women separate taxation and a separate tax allowance for the first time. But it boosted the earnings of better-off couples and widened the gap between two-earner families and the rest. Now it is time to think again.

A growing number of experts, including some Brown advisers, are saying that taxing couples independently was a seriously retrograde step. It gave well-off, dual-earner couples £1,000 extra, costing the state some £2bn a year. And yet, though many wives work, they continue to be regarded as "dependants" in the old-fashioned way – which entitles husbands to the Married Couples Allowance of another £250 a year, that costs the nation another £2.5bn.

Women campaigned for separate taxation not out of greed, but as a protest at the indignity of the previous system. The husband filled out the family tax form in his own name, demanding to know every penny his wife earned or saved, without the wife necessarily having access to the same information about her husband's money. But if couples were jointly taxed again they should sign the form jointly, with transparency on both sides. After all, poor couples on social security have never had independent rights. They are assessed jointly – though this new deal should include allowing women to draw their own benefits and their children's separately, instead of their husband collecting the lot.

Joint taxation (for those who cohabit, as well as for the married) would mean that for the first time it would become worth taxing Child Benefit. If you tried it now, it would hit too small a number of high-earning mothers to be worth it.

So if you took all the money collected from these three measures – joint taxation, abolishing the Married Couples Allowance and taxing Child Benefit – you would double Child Benefit. I have always been against increasing Child Benefit, as too much is wasted on women like me, who don't need it. But that objection fails, once you can tax it effectively. Then Child Benefit becomes the best way to get parents off social security and into work, as it creates no poverty trap. It also gives women everywhere more money in their hands to feed their children in a crisis.

This would be a redistributive act, taking from well-off couples and giving to poorer families with children, mainly taking from men and giving to women. But it would be a great deal more popular than using the income tax system. Those men who lost out would not doubt feel hard done by. But their complaints would be drowned out by all the delighted mothers who would get twice as much Child Benefit in their hands each week.

Would there be a great feminist outcry at returning to joint taxation? I think not, if that were the quid pro quo. Child Benefit is immensely popular, even with men. Now there is a big idea that hits every single one of the Taylor task force's targets. Forget fiddling about with tax credits, and go for doubling Child Benefit.



James Naughtie, head in hands, and John Humphrys on the 'Today' programme

Photograph: Andrew Burman

Birt's brutalism will bastardise our broadcasting culture for ever



JOHN TUSA
ON TURMOIL
AT THE BBC

It was an audibly distressed senior BBC editor on the phone. "Have you heard about the changes?" he asked. I said I had. Could he come and talk things over? Of course, but why? "It destroys everything in broadcasting that I believe in. It is appalling." He is not alone in feeling as he does. Sounds of distress and anger have been erupting from the belly of the BBC whale in the past 48 hours. By all accounts, the roasting handed out by Today staff to the authors of the plan – Richard Clegg and Stephen Mitchell – was blistering.

This is not run-of-the-mill journalist whingeing. The anxieties are professional and personal. They are about the entire tone and structure of the BBC, about the way it sees, reports and presents the world, and about the nature of the material it offers to viewers and listeners. They are not selfish anxieties about jobs and careers though most of the former will change, many of the latter will disappear. They reflect deep concern about the service the BBC will provide under the new dispensation.

But whatever the rows internal and external, no one should have any illusions. The Birt Plan will not be derailed, overruled, or modified. The Government will not intervene: the Governors will not lift a finger or utter a word of reproach or concern. The authoritarian chairman, Christopher Bland, will bark at them in his usual manner and they will lie down as they always have done.

Staff, however despondent or outraged, will not resign, or only in very small numbers. It is a cold, competitive world outside the BBC and the prospect of being jobless and penniless within 14 days concentrates the mind and subdues the heroics wonderfully. But it is still worthwhile – indeed essential – setting out what the consequences of the upheaval will be for listeners and viewers. They are not small; they are serious; they will be long lasting.

First, a word about Birt's tactics. They are those of the management shock troop. The comparisons with his 7 June putsch against the BBC World Service in 1996 are instructive. Now, as then, there was no prior consultation; he knew the resistance would be too big, the objections too weighty to permit them to be aired. Now, the timetable for implementation is even tighter than it was with last year's dismantling of autonomous BBC World Service programme making. For the biggest shake-up in BBC news broadcasting, the timetable for implementation is just two weeks. To call it dictatorial is wholly inadequate.

In 1996, neither the Deputy Director General, Bob Phillips, nor the Managing Director of the World Service, Sam Younger, were told of the

changes affecting the World Service until 48 hours before they were announced. Bob Phillips has now belatedly parted company with Birt; but did he know of the changes before he left, or was he again left "out of the loop"?

The tragedy is that a once great organisation – one of the finest creations of the liberal mind, one dedicated to an open and humane dialogue with its listeners and viewers, one that could only carry out such a dialogue because it conducted it internally first – has been subjected to such brutalising so-called "managerialism".

For as long as anybody can remember, BBC networks were characterised by individual programmes. The prospect of running one such – whether *Tonight*, *Newsnight*, *The World at One*, *Today* or *Panorama* – was the supreme challenge into which a generation or more of Britain's best broadcast journalists threw themselves. Each of these programmes, and many more, became great because it was distinctive, independent, unorthodox and frequently unpopular with the BBC hierarchy. As one of those who started *Newsnight* in 1980, I can confidently state that it was the vision of its original editors that created the programme that is now a pillar of the schedules. It would not have been able to develop as it did had it been part of some homogenised view of what BBC current affairs was. It succeeded because it threw over those existing conventions.

Birt's response is that a special executive editor can effectively be responsible for "programme distinctiveness", as if that were a definable, marketable and deliverable com-

modity. Such an assumption illustrates the depth of the chasm of incomprehension that underlies these proposals.

From now on, producers and broadcasters will not fight to the death to be first "for their programme". They will be told who comes first. They will need to get permission to be original. Listeners and viewers will lose variety, inspiration, and difference. The differences between radio and television news will wither. Television news stories will increasingly consist of – as they do now – the radio story with pictures; radio journalism will be reduced to the tv story in sound only. Both represent a bastard diminution of two great and once distinct communication cultures.

The days of internal competition between BBC programmes – once a critical ingredient in the BBC's success – will be gone. The Birtites insist on the internal market for resources; but at the same time they are killing the internal market in competition for ideas and excellence. But that is no accident. Ideas cost money; you have to pay the people who have them. Ideas cannot be tied into neat business plans. Birt's answer is to destroy the structures that created ideas – the programmes and the journalists behind them.

Much of this is happening already. A very senior TV jour-

nalist who recently resigned from the BBC told me that he did so in despair at the fact that whereas he had once been an active creative journalist, all his editors wanted now was for him to sit in his expensive foreign bureau and comment on what the news agencies wrote. The result is inevitable and wholly predictable: BBC journalism will be turned from a craft, an essential part of a nation's dialogue, into a marketable commodity.

But there is a further aspect to the transformation. If the whole historic concept of the "programme" as the core of BBC broadcasting has gone, its replacement will be the network – the unified, homogenised delivery of a single commodity, whether sport, or films or news. The BBC's contribution to world broadcasting was the idea and the execution of the individual "programme". That is now being thrown away.

No one should be surprised. A year ago, some of us warned that the Birt putsch would destroy World Service journalism. Despite protestations to the contrary, the Birtites have closed the repository of World Service excellence – the news reference library, and now give priority in breaking news stories to every outlet, including Radio Five Live, over World Service news. These people mean what they say. And what they say is awful.



PHOTO: DAILY MAIL

FORCED TO SUFFER IN A CAGED HELL

This poor, suffering creature is one of twelve neglected horses recently discovered in Cheshire. Its coat infested with lice and its ribs clearly visible, the horse was left to starve in this small cage. Many of the others were in far worse condition – one sadly died on the day we were called.

He immediately evacuated the horses to the nearest ILPH rehabilitation centre, where our staff are now working to save them.

Cruelty to horses is still too common in Britain. As a charity, we need your support to help end the suffering.

ILPH field officer Paul Teasdale, despite thirty years experience with horses, was shocked by what he saw.

Please help us to continue our work by returning the coupon today with a donation. Thank you.

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Sweet pictures of puppies and cats – it must be the lovable Unionists

JOHN WALSH



A magazine lands on my desk with a soggy thud and a picture of a fat, snoring baby, swaddled in terry-towel, on the front. "Let's Keep the Peace for Their Tomorrow", suggests a headline. Flicking through it, you're pulled up again and again by the lovely lovely photographs and their encouraging captions.

Here, for example, under a sweet photo of a small grey cat biting the nose of a perfectly adorable little golden retriever puppy, it says "Reconciliation is possible". A snap of a young family walking along a beach together is captioned: "We must move forward together, and you mutter to yourself, Mmm, that is so true. Under a... But I'm afraid I really can't stand any more of this emetic sentimentalism, this glutinous guff. What is this magazine? *Pacifists Monthly*? *The Watchtower*? Some tract from an unusually wet order of elderly contemplative nuns keen on the propagation of world peace?

No it isn't. This, dear reader, is *The Unionist*, "the magazine of the Unionist Information Office", its pages full of gung-ho pieces from David Trimble and various lobbyists about the peace settle-

ment, couched in the same emollient language ("Many people sense this opportunity. They sense that we can move forward positively..."), going on about the importance of playing a full part in the peace talks.

Can these be the same Unionists who have hovered so tamely on the threshold of the peace talks for so many weeks now? But then, you surmise, maybe this magazine is different. Maybe it represents a different, a nicer, a more conciliatory face of Unionism. Now then, who runs it? Why, one David Burnside. Not, surely, the flint-eyed PR man formerly with the Institute of Directors and latterly with British Airways, at the time of the controversial campaign against Virgin Airlines? Well, well. And what, I wonder, are the "dreams" he "dares to dream" about, say, Martin McGuinness? Or would they be rather hard to photograph?

What they were going on is a new form of words in the revised Catechism – the massive new rule-book which tells young Papists what they're supposed to believe. Those more densely mired in the swamp of Catholic doctrine than I am any more, tell me that all this is a misunderstanding of the papal corrigendum and that, in fact, Il Papa has become more, rather than less, disapproving of the solitary act. But the very mention of the subject pitches

me back down a ladder of years to the time when we were devout and pious and believed in the total package of sin and conscience and obedience and the lurking charm of hell. Being a young Catholic meant, as Kate Saunders was so eloquently put it, you were always one shag away from eternal perdition. If the chances of having sex with someone else were a little remote, as they tend to be in those Catholic communities, they still got you: masturbation was deemed a mortal sin, just like murder and invading a Neutral Country. How, in those days, we would have welcomed a little papal confusion.

I went down to Brook Street, Mayfair, on Sunday to see the unveiling of a blue plaque in honour of Jimi Hendrix, the great guitarist who died of a vomit-related condition 30 years ago. The azure platter outside No 23 was unceremoniously by Pete Townshend of The Who. Jimi's old boss Noel Redding made a speech and crowds of photographers snapped away at lots of people in purple-haze velvet, crimson cravats and fuchsia bell-bottoms. And then a rumour ran around the crowd that

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Jimi Hendrix's father and sister had flown over from Seattle and were on the pavement across the road.

Consternation. The crowd surged over to where Al Hendrix stood, in white Jimi Hendrix T-shirt and green Jimi Hendrix cap alongside Jani, a very calm-looking piece of work with raven hair. The crowd proffered pieces of paper for autographs, clutched their elbows and told them what Jimi's music had meant to them. Unable to express their love for the main figure, they focused their love on the next of kin. It was all so Prince Harry and Prince William. Later, an assembly of rock journalists compared notes: how Jani isn't a sister, or even half-sister, only Al's adopted daughter; how her fondness for merchandising Jimi products (even golfing wear, though the great man was a stranger to the putting green) has alienated friends and fans alike; how they hadn't originally been invited to the opening, or had been, but originally said no... There it was – after the public mourning and the expressions of sympathy to the bereaved there came the Family Row. Jimi Hendrix – rock music's royalty.

22/OBITUARIES

Koi Nagata

Gunji (Koi) Nagata, Japanese poet, artist and essayist, born Kakogawa City, Hyogo Prefecture, Japan 1900; died Neyagawa, Osaka, Japan 25 August 1997.

At the age of 95, the celebrated haiku poet Koi Nagata lost his house in the earthquake that devastated Kobe. But he did not lose his life. "Just two minutes before the quake struck at 5.46, I had gone to the toilet, a solid, brick-built refuge that preserved me, like a miracle, when the house collapsed."

"I tried to attract attention by banging the washbasin with a *yucumashi* (a copper tea-ceremony utensil). It was quite fun, banging away like that - *kankara kan! kankara kan!* It sounded like a Buddhist chant - *Nammyohorengekyo* - and I was rescued by a delivery boy from the sake shop next door."

The number of people writing haiku in Japan was said to be 10 million. But those numbers are now decreasing rapidly: haiku writers are growing old and dying, and the young now are for the most part more interested in material things than in the evanescent and difficult art of haiku. So Nagata's passing is being regarded as being symbolic of the rapid decline in

the "haiku boom" of the last few decades. There are still some ancient *haifu*, some of them over a hundred years old, but they are no longer practising. Koi Nagata was the oldest poet in activity.

He started writing haiku at the age of 17, but, 80 years later, he said he was still learning: "I never tired of composing haiku, and my work is still not finished. I always feel I have further to go, taking the middle path in life, which allows me to go on burning myself out with poetic energy."

Nagata had lifelong employment at Mitsubishi's Takasago Paper Factory. Before the Second World War, he had belonged to the same haiku group as Hayao Ishida, known for its poetic research into humanistic themes. After the war, he joined for a while the Tenro (Strius) group around the influential poet and critic Seishi Yamaguchi.

But in 1949 he started his own group, with the magazine *Ryū-za* ("Lyrical"). Founding his practice on zen thought, he wrestled with the themes of space, religion, philosophy, and established his own unique haiku style, distinguished by its sense of life's all-pervading loneliness, and the desolation of man's fatal decay. His

favourite Western poet was W.B. Yeats, whose short poem "After Long Silence" gave him his motto: "Bodily decrepitude is wisdom..."

He learned from the great medieval noh dramatist Zeami to appreciate the beauty of decay. Zeami said: "What is interesting is that the flower becomes withered." Nagata said: "That sort of beauty in decline is more interesting to me, because there is energy in that decline. I always have a longing to witness the death of the flowers and plants before my very eyes. Most people try to see flowers blooming in their prime, but I desire to see them at their end."

So his very personal and sometimes obscure style, like no other, is linked to the imagery of decrepitude, loneliness, the frailty of natural things. His aim was to transcend despair by creating vital haiku whose energies sprang from the depths of the poet's solitude.

After the earthquake, he criticised the general lowering of haiku standards: "Most people are content with learning technique, but they are like children splashing around in shallow water. It makes me sad that in general haiku people are so superficial, without zen, without philosophical backbone" -

a view shared by our own great haiku scholar R.H. Blyth, but not by most of the British haiku establishment.

Nagata detested the power struggles that go on in the ranks of haiku groups, and always dissociated himself from such intrigues. "Power, fame, riches, a comfortable life are all far removed from the true way of haiku. I admire Bashō's haiku because he upholds the principles of detachment from human desires, and respect for the life of the spirit."

After the Kobe earthquake, Nagata wrote a collection about that experience, *Jin*, which includes this typical "haiku of the beauty of decay":

The withered grasses - without a house to live in, my life burns hotter.

He added: "I have come to understand loneliness from the bottom of my heart." And: "When you really become familiar with loneliness, it becomes its opposite, and is filled with gaiety." He quoted the last lines from Yeats's great poem "From Oedipus at Colonus": "Never to have lived is best, ancient writers say; Never to have drawn the breath of life, never to have looked into the eye of the day; The second best's a gay goodnight and quickly turn away."

- James Kirkup



Nagata: at 97 the oldest active haiku poet. 'My work is still not finished,' he said. 'I always feel I have further to go'

John Garnett

William John Poulton Maxwell Garnett, industrial campaigner, born London 6 August 1921; Director, Industrial Society 1962-84; CBE 1970; married 1943 Barbara Rutherford-Smith (three sons, one daughter; marriage dissolved 1985); 1986 Julia Cleverdon (two daughters); died Paris, Greece 14 August 1997.

John Garnett changed the way a whole generation thought about work. His experiences in the Royal Navy during the Second World War and later working as a clerk and then personnel manager at ICI (1947-62) convinced him that the challenge at work was not to protect people from exploitation but to give them the opportunity to make use of their talents. People long to give but so often organisations make no use of their gifts.

Taking over as director of a largely moribund Industrial Welfare Association in 1962, Garnett changed its name to

the Industrial Society and made it the leading influence in Britain in man management through courses, conferences, but above all through his speeches.

He was an inspiring speaker with his shock of white hair, his illegible notes clutched in his hand, pouring energy into his audience. Each point was hammered home with stories and examples. He claimed his technique was learnt keeping old ladies awake at League of Nations rallies.

In hundreds of speeches over 30 years, John Garnett spoke to thousands of managers and supervisors in all sorts of organisations and sent them away armed with their own personal action points, determined to change the way they managed and put some of that inspiration into their workplace. His three principal messages were the importance of effective first-line leadership; the simple skill of team briefing to galvanise the whole organisation; and the need for vision to inspire people at work.

His book *The Work Challenge*, first published in 1973, set out what needed to be done by leaders to help people put more into and get more out of their work at a time of changing technology and changing attitudes to life. He was proudest, however, of the plastic card of 10 points for leadership action.

William John Poulton Maxwell Garnett, to give him his full name, carried forward the mission of his father and grandfather. His grandfather William Garnett had worked with Sidney and Beatrice Webb to achieve extraordinary success in bringing educational order to London. His father, Maxwell Garnett, moved from being Principal of Manchester's College of Technology to the League of Nations Union, establishing branches and undergraduate groups throughout the country.

William Garnett also built a holiday home at Horestone Point, Seagrove Bay, near Seaview on the Isle of Wight. Sir Edward Poulton, the Oxford

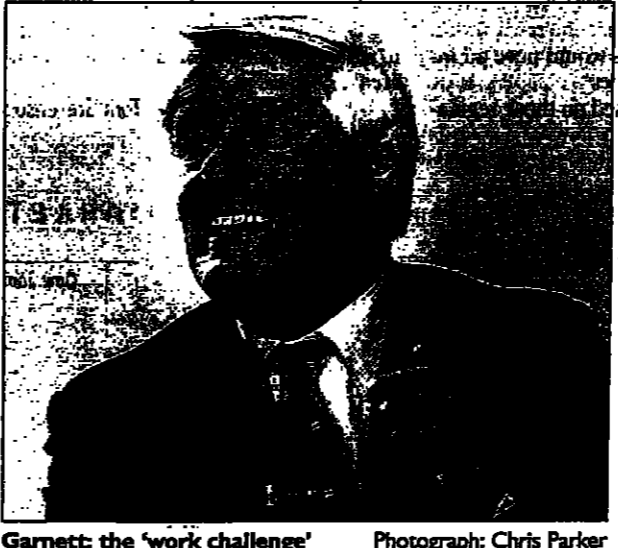
zoologist, had a family home two miles south, at St Helens. John Garnett's parents, Maxwell Garnett and Margaret Poulton, met, he said, playing beach hockey on the sand of Priory Bay between their parents' homes. After marriage they bought part of a field above the bay to build their own home. John Garnett later gave coastal land including Horestone Point to the National Trust.

The Great War called John Garnett's uncle including the England rugby captain Ronald Poulton-Palmer, the carman Kenneth Garnett, and Stuart Garnett, who founded the sea scouts. His uncles were the hounds at his heels for much of his life, and responsible for the tremendous drive to achieve and change the world. When asked to volunteer for secret work in the Second World War, he knew he could not face his mother if he refused. He served first as lieutenant in an amazing nautical undercover task force, taking spies and supplies between Cornwall and occupied France.

Garnett loved the sea, sailing and the Isle of Wight, although in later years he also took holidays in the Greek islands where he died. The family gatherings and holidays on the Isle of Wight are known for their size. Beach hockey at low tide with 20 each side might be followed by 50 in St Helens Church. The annual walk to

Whitcliffe Bay, was distinguished by John Garnett telling successive generations the stories of Captain Scott's *Last Expedition* and of the short life of the *Titanic*.

At his retirement party, organised by his second wife, Julia Cleverdon, now Director of Business in the Community, thousands from industry and



Garnett: the 'work challenge' Photograph: Chris Parker

commerce came to the Albert Hall in teams of 10. Each team involved managers with trade unionists and young people for a day of involvement with company chairmen and trade union leaders whose careers had grown alongside John Garnett.

On leaving the Industrial Society in 1986, Garnett served as Chairman of West Lambeth Health Authority (1986-90), fighting the waves of despondency in a changing Health Service and pulling St Thomas' Hospital in London back from the brink of closure.

He never really retired, believing that you should run the last lap fastest of all. He poured his energy into his younger daughters' school-parent association, the New River Walk in Islington, and St James's, his local church, building a new church hall and sheltered accommodation for single-parent families. He had earlier been Deputy Chairman of the United Nations Association, 1954-56, and chaired the Churches Council on Gambling, from 1965 to 1971.

Garnett led by example, walking the job, listening and speaking to people at all levels in the organisation with the same passion and care that he poured out in his speeches. At Lambeth Health Authority, appalled by the litter in the corridors, he set himself the task of picking up 10 pieces of litter on his way in and 10 on his way out. His greatest joy was seeing a consultant do likewise.

For his 75th birthday last year, 75 of the family put on a performance in full costume of *HMS Pinafore* in a Greek amphitheatre he had built, like his beloved Stone House in the Isle of Wight, by hand alone.

John Garnett's strength came from a real love of people, and the joys of setting them alight and his belief in Christ's call to serve God and his fellow man. His sense of humour - and a strong sense of his own failings - kept him approachable and fun, a very practical idealist.

- Rupert Middleton and Peter Bottomley



Lowe: propagandist for postal history

Robson Lowe

Robson Lowe, stamp collector and dealer; born 7 January 1905; married (two daughters); died 19 August 1997.

Robson Lowe was the towering giant in the world of stamp collecting or philately. A stamp dealer, auctioneer, writer, editor, publisher and organiser, he has left an enormous amount of literature on all aspects of philately.

"Robbie", according to his own story, started stamp dealing as a schoolboy when he was 15 years old, in 1920. He was determined to establish a career in stamp dealing and first applied for a job with the London stamp dealers Fox & Co, in South Kensington, but was not accepted due to his outspoken

comment that he was only working to learn how to become successful himself. Funded by his parents, he started a business which grew until his name became renowned world-wide. Initially it was called the Regent Stamp Co, with a subsidiary, Robson Lowe Ltd (1926), which became arguably the leading stamp auction house in the UK and was taken over by Christie's in 1980.

His auction house became famous and he handled many of the great collections, primarily through personal contacts established through his standing as a philatelist. Collectors of today owe much to him through his marketing the archives of the stamp printing companies of De La Rue, Bradbury Wilkinsons, and Waterlows, and selling these

publicly and privately, spreading the sales over a period so that the market could absorb this tremendous original artwork, proofs and essays of the stamps of so many countries.

From a humble beginning, Robson Lowe became one of the great entrepreneurs. By 1934 he was successful enough to launch his own magazine, the *Philatelist*, which became the *Philatelic* in 1937 and is still published today. Promotion of the hobby, and hence himself, through the written word was his particular strength.

By 1948 he had published his first major book, *Handbook of Postage Stamps of the Empire 1680-1900*, which introduced the field of postal history - the study of routes, rates and postal markings of the mail - to the philatelic world as a serious col-

lecting field. Between 1948 and 1990, this was followed by his six volumes of *Encyclopaedia of British Empire Postage Stamps*, which became the authoritative points of reference for the stamps and postal history of Great Britain and the Empire.

Such books not only were learned, they were also propaganda in their promotion of postal history, an aspect of collecting which he established as a most important part of philately. His belief in the subject led him to introduce the first Postal History auction sales: they have now been copied by hundreds of auction houses across the world.

In the 1970s he gained yet another landmark in the development of postal history by persuading the Corsini family to sell their letter archive. This

material was the first major source of early postal history and did cause problems as the letters, and the associated private postal markings, were written in antique Italian. Not to be defeated, Lowe taught himself the language, and translated many of the historical letters. Indeed, he became so proficient that he lectured learned societies on the subject in Italy.

Whilst an extremely successful businessman, he also contributed much in the promotion of the hobby, and assistance to others not so fortunate. Unable for health reasons to serve in the Second World War, he created in Bournemouth the 1940 Stamp Exhibition to celebrate the centenary of the Penny Black, the world's first postage stamp. Linked to this, he organised

many events, including an auction, to support the Red Cross in its war efforts. His talent for organising stamp exhibitions led to his being the Organising Secretary of the 1960 London International Exhibition on the South Bank and the early British Philatelic Exhibitions at the Seymour Hall.

Lowe received many philatelic honours. He was the first "stamp professional" who was invited to become an Honorary Member of the Royal Philatelic Society, London. In recognition of his contributions to newer aspects of philatelic collecting he was made Honorary President of the Cinderella Stamp Club in 1983, and of the Revenue Society of Great Britain on its formation in 1989.

- Francis Kiddle

BIRTHS

GREY: On 13 September in Oslo, to Bert (nee Stokke) and Charles, a son William Ole, a brother for Jim and Ted.

MARRIAGES

DEAN - FARRINGTON: Cherie and Michael were married yesterday in Halifax. They will live in Sowerby Bridge with Nathaniel and Betanai at Lovedown Cottage, Blimey.

DEATHS

NORRIS: James Thomas (Tom), on 12 September 1997 in a tragic swimming accident, aged 37, son of Norman and Anne, brother to Anne-Marie, John and Alice, beloved husband of Heidi and loving father to Elizabeth. Funeral service at St Michael and All Angels, Blackheath Park, London SE14, on Monday 22 September at 12 noon, followed by cremation at St Peter and St Vincent, Croydon, Surrey, on Tuesday 23 September at 12 noon. Family flowers only; donations if desired to the Artists' General Benevolent Institution, Burlington House, Piccadilly, London W1V

BIRTHS, MARRIAGES & DEATHS

DDJ, or to own preferred charity. The family wish to express their appreciation to all Tom's friends.

MEMORIAL SERVICES

TRENCH: A memorial service for the life of Richard Hugh Roger Trench will be held at 3pm on Saturday 11 October at the church of St Lawrence, Jersey, Guiltail, Jersey EC2. Enquiries to J. Trench (0171-359 6093) or P. Trench (0171-231 4622).

Announcements for BIRTHS, MARRIAGES & DEATHS should be sent in writing to the Gazette Editor, The Independent, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5DL, telephoned on 0171-230 3011 or faxed to 0171-230 3010. Charges are £6.50 a line (VAT extra).

Birthdays

Lord Ackner, a former Lord of Appeal in Ordinary, 71; Mr Ray Alan, ventriloquist, 67; Mr Geoff Baxter, cricketer, 51; Mr Anthony Beadles, Headmaster, Epsom College, 57; Mr Jack Cardiff, film director, 83; Mr Nial Crowley, former chairman, All-Ireland Irish Banks, 71; Mr Winston Davis, cricketer, 39; Viscount Eccles, former MP, 93; Mr Robin Fleming, chairman, Robert Fleming Holdings, 65; Sir Thomas Hetherington QC, former Director of Public Prosecutions, 71; Sir Curtis Keeble, former diplomat, 75; Dr Marjorie Mowman MB Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, 48; Mr Derek Pringle, cricketer, 39; Professor Christopher Ricks, Professor of English, Boston University, 64; Lord Rodger of Earlsferry QC, Lord Justice General and Lord President of the Court of Session, 53; Mr John Kendall Rowlands, former Keeper, Department of Prints and Drawings, British Museum, 66; Mr Peter

Shilton, footballer, 48; Mr John Stockart, Principal, Sheffield Hallam University, 59; Professor Dorothy Wedderburn, former Principal, Royal Holloway and Bedford College, 72.

Anniversaries

BIRTHS: Gilbert Burnet, Bishop of Salisbury and author, 1643; Dr Samuel Johnson, lexicographer and writer, 1709; Jean-Bernard Léon Foucault, physicist, 1819; Anton Maare, landscape painter, 1838; Hans Müller, historian of music, 1854; Sir Owen Seaman, poet and editor of *Punch*, 1861; Gerald Hugh Tyrwhitt-Wilson, 14th Baron Bessborough, composer, 1883; Arthur Benjamin, composer, 1893; Fay Compton (Virginia Lilian Elaine Compton), actress, 1894; John George Dieffenbach, statesman, 1895; Greta Garbo (Greta Lovisa Gustafsson), film actress, 1905; Kwame Nkrumah, Ghanaian prime minister, 1909; Reassano Brazzi, actor, 1916; Desiderius Domitian, Roman emperor, murdered 96;

Hubert (Huybrecht) van Eyck, painter, 1436; Matthew Peck, poet, 1721; Andrew Fossils, bookseller and printer, 1775; Leonard Euler, mathematician, 1783; Gottlieb August Spangenberg, founder of the Moravian Church in America, 1792; Olaf Swartz, pianist, 1818; Robert Pollok, poet, 1827; William Hazlitt, critic and essayist, 1830; Joseph Locke, railway engineer, 1860; Dion Boucicault (Dionysius Lardner Boucicault), playwright and actor, 1890; Armand-Hippolyte Louis Fizeau, physicist, 1866; George MacDonald, poet and novelist, 1905; Francis Herbert Bradley, philosopher, 1924; Dr Dag Hammarskjöld, UN secretary-general, 1961; Sean O'Casey, playwright, 1964; Sir John Douglas Cockcroft, physicist, 1951. On this day the Theatre Royal, Covent Garden, London (Royal Opera House) second theatre opened, 1809; Chile revolted and became independent of Spain, 1810; the Anti-Corn Law League was established by Richard Cobden, 1838; the *New York Times*

was first published, 1851; the Irish Home Rule Bill received Royal Assent, 1914; South African troops landed in German South-West Africa, 1914; Manchuria was taken by the Japanese, who set up the puppet state of Manchukuo, 1931; the Soviet Union was admitted to the League of Nations, 1934; following continual interruption of newspaper production by the NGA, the Newspaper Publishers' Association announced that all national newspapers in London and Manchester would be closed down on the following day, 1971. Today is the Feast Day of St Ferreolus of Limoges, St Ferreolus of Vienne, St John Massias, St Joseph of Cupertino, St Methodius of Olympus and St Richards.

Lectures

National Gallery: Marl Griffiths, "Performance Art (3): Degas, *Mlle La La at the Cirque Fernando*", 1pm. Victoria and Albert Museum: Michael Keen, "Art and Design of the

Late 19th and Early 20th Centuries", 2.30pm.

Tate Gallery: Colin Cruise, "Turner and Time: *The Bay of Biscay*", 1pm. British Museum: Joe Cribb, "HSBC Money Gallery: an introduction", 1.15pm.

National Portrait Gallery: Margaret Blinn, "The Fine Court Judges", 1.10pm.

Kettle's Yard, Cambridge: "Berty Thompson's Kettle's Yard", 1.10pm.

Atlantic Council

Professor Walter Goldstein, Vice-Chairman of the Standing Conference of Atlantic Organisations and Visiting Professor at Rockefeller College, State University of New York, was the guest speaker at an Atlantic Forum Briefing arranged by the Atlantic Council of the United Kingdom last night at Brassey House, John Street, London WC1. Mr Alan Lee Williams, Director of the Atlantic Council, was in the chair.

ROYAL ENGAGEMENTS

The Princess Royal, Patron, the Butler Trust, visits HM Prison Askham Grange, Askham Richard, North Yorkshire, and attends the British Equine Veterinary Association Annual International Scientific Congress, Harrogate Conference Centre, Harrogate, North Yorkshire. The Duke of Gloucester, President, NABC - Clubs for Young People, visits clubs in Surrey, and attends a reception and dinner to mark the 50th anniversary of the Society of Architects at Guildhall, London EC1. The Duke of Kent, Patron, the South Bank Foundation, attends a reception at the Purcell Room, Royal Festival Hall, London SE1.

Changing of the Guard
The Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment mounts the Queen's Life Guard at Horse Guards, 11am; 1st Battalion Scots Guards mounts the Queen's Guard, at Buckingham Palace, 11.30am, band provided by the Grenadier Guards.

Europe's exchanges link up in effort to topple Liffe

London's position as the leading financial centre of Europe came under threat yesterday as the German, French and Swiss futures and options bourses said they had teamed up to challenge Liffe's dominance of European derivatives trading. Meanwhile, a senior City figure has warned that the spiralling cost of regulation could jeopardise London's competitiveness. Tom Stevenson, Financial Editor, reports.

The chief executive of the London International Financial Futures Exchange (Liffe), Daniel Hodson, hit out yesterday at plans by his counterparts in three European countries to create a unified derivatives exchange in the run-up to monetary union. The planned alliance poses the most serious threat yet to the dominance of the 10-year-old London market.

The proposed super-exchange would be the largest market in futures and options in Europe, toppling Liffe from its leadership of the market in financial derivatives at a crucial time just months before the exchange rate parities for EMU are announced next spring.

In a simultaneous announcement in Frankfurt, Paris and Zurich yesterday, the main challengers to Liffe in Europe said

they had developed plans to form a joint market for fixed income derivatives. The move followed a recent collaboration on European equity indices and paved the way, the three said, to a fully fledged alliance which would integrate their cash markets.

In a joint statement, the exchanges said: "This alliance gives us the pole position for European Monetary Union. The alliance will offer the largest derivatives market in Europe." Last year the three partner exchanges had a joint volume of 194 million options and futures contracts.

A major significance of the link is the way it has overcome differences between trading platforms in the three countries, allowing parallel trading of products on the German and Swiss electronic systems and the open-outcry floors used by France's Mafif market. New products launched by the combined group will be traded electronically on one of the exchange's systems but dealers in the other participating companies will have equal access through a common "log-in". Only existing products will continue to be traded in Paris's open-outcry pits.

That is certain to focus attention once more on Liffe's insistence that its own system of floor trading is more efficient and provides greater liquidity than rival electronic platforms.

Traders say the continental agreement is mere window-dressing for the more fundamental battle between the different trading systems of international exchanges in London and Frankfurt, as the Continent

gears up for European economic and monetary union in January 1999.

Liffe is well aware of the threat the German bourse (DTB) provides. The DTB's trading volume in German Bond futures is catching up with Liffe's, at 44.4 per cent of total market share in August.

The Continental exchanges announced their link-up with impeccable timing, one day ahead of Liffe's launch of medium-term German bond, or Bobli, contracts, in direct competition to similar products on the DTB. "The link leaves Liffe at a disadvantage but I don't think it leaves them at any bigger disadvantage than it did before," said one German banker.

"The key there is the technology. The biggest thing that's threatening Liffe right now is simply the technology. This initiative does show the momentum is going towards electronic trading."

Liffe is moving to strengthen its own electronic technology, the mainly after-hours Automated Fit Trading (AFT) system, but remains well behind the DTB in this area.

Joerg Franke, chief executive of DTB, the German derivatives exchange, and Euronext, its alliance with its Swiss counterpart, upped the stakes in the growing battle between the bourses yesterday by offering to join forces with Liffe if it was prepared to abandon its open-outcry method of trading in favour of an electronic system.

Mr Hodson said Liffe was already the dominant player and accused the proposed merger of limiting choice.

Outlook, page 25



Open outcry: The continental exchanges claim the biggest thing threatening Liffe (above) is technology

SuperSIB 'could cost £200m a year'

The creation of a unified City regulator, SuperSIB, is likely to cost City firms £200m a year, according to an estimate by Coopers & Lybrand. That could jeopardise London's role as a leading financial centre, a senior figure at the accountancy firm told a conference on City regulation yesterday.

John Tattersall, chairman of Coopers' financial services team, was speaking shortly after Helen Liddell, Economic Secretary to the Treasury, added flesh to the bones of the proposed new Financial Services Bill that will put the new City watchdog on the statute book.

She promised a wholesale repeal and

replacement of legislation in order to create "a more coherent body of law" and called on City practitioners to participate fully in the consultation process leading up to its publication next year. Firms that did not do so and were unhappy with the end result would have no-one to blame but themselves, she said.

Other features of the forthcoming bill she spelled out yesterday included the maintenance of SIB's legal status as a company limited by guarantee, the appointment of its board by the Treasury, and the promise that City practitioners would have an input in the setting of fees.

Mr Tattersall focused on those regula-

tory costs when he warned that the cost of regulation to individual firms would almost certainly rise between now and the end of the decade. He said the industry faced a challenge to keep those costs down.

According to work done by Coopers & Lybrand, the costs of regulation in the transition year from the self-regulatory system to the new single watchdog are likely to jump by 50 per cent to more than £200m.

Mr Tattersall warned there was a danger that the new regime would impose a "highest common denominator" approach to regulation which would dramatically increase costs.

— Tom Stevenson

Strong high-street sales rekindle fears of increased interest rates

Higher interest rates are back on the agenda after stronger than expected retail sales, falling unemployment and a rise in average earnings growth scotched recent hopes that the buoyant economy was moderating.

Tom Stevenson, Financial Editor, sifts the data.

Retail sales continued to rise in August, fuelling fears that the Bank of England's pause for breath after a series of four interest rate rises might be short-lived. Analysts said the strength of high street sales was surprising given the poor weather and large numbers of people who had left the country on windfall-financed holidays.

The 5.6 per cent year-on-year rise in retail sales chimed with the lowest unemployment rate since August 1980 and average earnings rising at an annual rate of 4.5 per cent to paint a picture of a continuing boom.

Meanwhile, minutes from the August meeting of the Bank of England's Monetary Policy Committee confirmed the increasing concern of policymakers that rates will need to rise if the economy is to meet the Government's inflation target.

Adam Cole, UK economist at HSBC James Capel, said the strength of the high street data supported his view that the market had been premature in looking for a slowdown in demand. "The strength of consumer spending reflects more than just the impact of the windfall gains — one only has to look as far as today's labour market data for evidence of this."

That background, he added, meant the upside risks for base rates were greater than markets had priced into valuations. That had been underlined by the minutes of the 7 August meeting of the Monetary Policy Committee which showed its members voting unanimously for higher base rates.

Another surprise in the minutes was the revelation that the Bank had actively considered intervention to reverse the strength of the pound which caused exporters such problems early in the summer. Its unusual comments to talk down the pound were seen as an unexpected change of tack by the traditionally discreet "Old Lady".

One of the big disappointments for in-

flation hawks in yesterday's data was that official sales figures flatly contradicted evidence from the Confederation of British Industry and British Retail Consortium suggesting spending slowed in August.

Nick Stamenkovic, economist at DKB International, said the data reinforced the Bank's concerns that the economy was growing too strongly. And for Michael Dicks, UK economist at Lehman Brothers, the Bank of England's decision to sit back and take stock of the economy was putting it behind the curve. "Over the summer, the rate rises were pre-emptive but now we're back to the more traditional pattern in the UK of too little too late."

With September data largely meaningless thanks to the loss of an important trading day as the country watched Princess Diana's funeral, the Bank of England is expected to persist with its cautious stance for a couple of months, but economists agreed that a rate rise by the end of the year was likely.

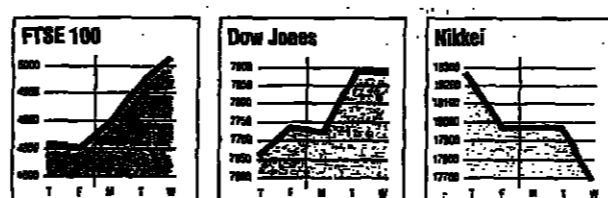
David Dharshini, at HSBC Markets, said: "These stronger-than-expected figures confirm that the windfalls continue to find their way to the high street. With sales growing by over 2 per cent in the latest three months, these numbers are unlikely to escape the notice of the MPC, and suggest that base rates have yet to reach their peak."

Unemployment fell 48,600 in August after a decline of 54,600 (revised from 49,800) in July. That took the jobless rate back to 5.3 per cent, its lowest since 1980. Vacancies were 6,900 higher in August and 23 per cent up on the previous year. That tightening labour market was reflected in underlying average earnings, which were 4.5 per cent higher in July than a year earlier. The increase in June was 4.25 per cent.

According to Francesca Massone of Goldman Sachs: "On any measure, the labour market is still tightening at an alarming rate. Vacancies are 57 per cent above their long-term trend and unemployment is now 97,000 below its previous cyclical low."

She pointed out that the rise in average earnings growth was due to a recent settlement in the construction sector, which is suffering more than most sectors from labour shortages, but warned that those could easily spill over into other industries. She predicted a further half-point base rate rise by next spring.

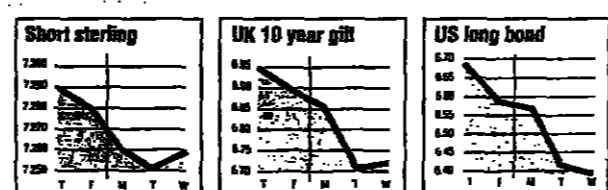
STOCK MARKETS



*Dow Jones index and graph on Sun

Index	Close	Change	Change (%)	52 wk high	52 wk low	Yield (%)
FTSE 100	5013.10	36.70	0.74	5086.80	3900.40	3.54
FTSE 250	4686.80	44.00	0.95	4729.40	4348.10	3.53
FTSE 350	2412.20	18.50	0.77	2436.00	1949.20	3.53
FTSE All Share	2365.67	17.48	0.75	2376.39	1825.79	3.52
FTSE SmallCap	2265.4	7.30	0.32	2374.20	2126.40	3.29
FTSE Healthcare	1267.4	4.30	0.34	1346.50	1158.70	3.28
FTSE AIM	1074.3	0.00	0.00	1135.00	1082.10	0.93
Dow Jones	7907.07	-5.22	-0.07	8259.31	5867.74	1.67
Nikkei	17683.27	-291.25	-1.62	21612.30	17303.55	0.87
Hong Kong	14411.19	-219.48	-1.50	16673.27	11546.70	2.89
Dax	4010.48	111.53	2.86	4438.99	2624.44	1.99

INTEREST RATES

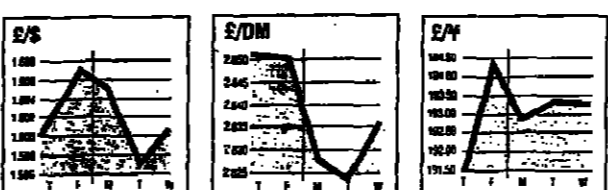


Index	3 month	1 yr	1 yr	1 yr	1 yr	1 yr	1 yr
UK	7.26	1.41	7.44	1.31	6.72	-1.01	6.65
US	5.72	0.16	5.98	-0.05	6.89	-0.71	7.10
Japan	0.57	0.06	0.64	-0.09	2.17	-0.70	2.83
Germany	3.30	0.20	3.70	0.40	5.57	-0.59	6.21

MAIN PRICE CHANGES

Rises	Falls	Price (p)	Change (p)	% Change
Rothmans Assoc		938.00	63.00	10.98
Glyndwr Ind		272.50	19.00	7.50
Thistle Hotels		136.00	9.00	7.09
Wair Group PLC		288.50	18.50	6.43
Brit Airways PLC		670.00	-32.00	-3.58
Costs Virella		104.50	-4.50	-3.72
BB PLC		258.50	-10.00	-3.71
Half Power PLC		552.00	-20.50	-3.71

CURRENCIES



Pound	Dollar	Euro	Yield	Change	% Change
Dollar	1.6003	-0.0003	1.5551		
D-Mark	2.8554	-0.1501	2.9552		
Yen	193.35	+0.18	171.48		
£ Index	98.50	+0.40	86.10		
Dollar	1.1280	+0.0030	0.8431		
D-Mark	1.7724	+0.3701	1.5145		
Yen	121.08	+0.13	109.17		
\$ Index	105.10	-0.40	97.20		

OTHER INDICATORS

Index	Close	Change	% Change	Yr Ago	Next Day
Brit Gov (5)	18.17	-0.04	-0.21	21.71	
Gold (5)	380.15	-0.60	-0.16	383.35	
Silver (5)	4.59	-0.13	-2.83	5.06	
Base Rates					

www.bloomberg.com

source: Bloomberg

'Prudence' ruled out bigger BG buy-back

BG raised the prospect of further controversial share buy-backs yesterday after announcing plans to hand back £1.3bn to investors, reports Chris Godsmark, Business Correspondent.

At the same time the group slashed its dividend payout to shareholders almost a half.

Richard Giordano, BG's chairman, admitted yesterday that the company had considered a bigger buy-back of more than £2bn and did not rule out further windfalls to investors later. "We could have done more but we needed to be prudent."

The share buy-back plans come months after the company had fought a running battle with the industry regulator, Clare Spottiswoode, over pipeline charges. Mr Giordano insisted the money would come by raising BG's debts to £5bn. "We don't have the money in the till to buy back the shares. We have to borrow," he said.

The anticipated flak over the move largely failed to materialise, with the Gas Consumers Council suggesting the buy-back, which would replace expensive equity with cheaper debt, could be good for customers. Unison, one of the main gas unions, called for a meeting with the

company to explain why it could afford a buy-back when cutting 2,500 jobs.

Shares in BG fell 10p to 258.5p yesterday as investors digested the company's announcement of a big cut in its dividend. The payout to 1.4 million investors will fall this year from 14.5p to 8p, slashing the company's dividend bill from £640m to £320m. The reduction follows the Monopolies and Mergers Commission's call for big cuts in BG's pipeline charges, which will reduce annual revenues by some £650m.

The company refused to be drawn yesterday on continued haggling over the price formula with Clare Spottiswoode, the regulator. She is proposing to cap BG's pipeline revenues, a move that the company claims would go beyond the MMC's findings.

The news came as BG announced half-yearly losses of £28m, after including a £514m charge to cover the windfall utility tax. Earnings were £486m before the windfall tax bill, though warmer winter weather knocked £104m off profits.

BG's Exploration and Production business announced profits of £57m, a strong improvement from losses of £26m the year before.

Separately yesterday Ms Spottiswoode revealed that 500,000 domestic customers had switched from British Gas to new suppliers in competition trials covering 2 million homes in the south of England.

Energis to buy services from Orange

Energis, the telephones business likely to be floated this year by National Grid, is in negotiations with Orange which could see the mobile operator offering fixed-line services for the first time.

The deal would be the second link-up with a mobile company for Energis, which is expected to sign a similar agreement with Vodafone within days. Under the plans Orange could sell Energis fixed phone services under its own brand. It would enable Orange, newest of the four mobile operators, to move towards a combined mobile and fixed phone handset.

The deal would enable Energis to gain local links to more customers through the Orange mobile network, which has more than 1 million subscribers. Around 40 per cent of Energis's costs currently stem from paying access charges to route its calls through British Telecom's local network.

Energis is also carrying out trials of wireless technology to transmit fixed phone line signals to bypass the BT network. The technology, similar to that used by Iridium, would help the company push into the small- and medium-sized business market.

Though Energis has amassed 20,000 business customers it has so far concentrated its assault on the lucrative large company market, running large internal phone networks for Boots, Virgin and British Gas. Revenues of £97m last year are expected to grow to £160m this year.

Another area of expansion has come from Internet traffic. Energis is understood to have signed a £10m contract with Demon, the UK's largest independent Internet access provider, offering phone line capacity. Though the flotation plans are advanced, the Grid is not thought finally to have decided on the sale. It could value Energis at up to £1bn.



World leaders at their last summit in Denver. The IMF's forecasts are upbeat about the world economy despite the current financial crisis in South-east Asia

IMF praises Britain's performance

The world economy outlook is the best it has been for a decade and is underpinned by solid growth with low inflation in Britain, the United States and Canada. This conclusion is the centrepiece of the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) annual world economic forecast released yesterday, writes Stephen Vines in Hong Kong.

The economies of Germany, France and Italy are picking up, but slowly. None of them is expected to match the growth of the British economy which is forecast to grow in real terms by 3.3 per cent this year and 2.6 per cent the following year.

Flemming Larsen, director of the IMF's report project, said he was more concerned about micro-economic fundamentals in Europe than the problems of fiscal convergence which was needed if European monetary union was to be achieved. He said the biggest worry was that, unlike Britain, the continental European countries were not placing sufficient emphasis on making labour markets more flexible.

The IMF, which generally favours conservative fiscal policies, points to Britain as a shining example of a country which has implemented labour market reforms to produce greater flexibility and as having a firm fiscal policy which has succeeded in reducing inflationary pressures.

Praise for Britain, and indirectly for the July Budget presented by Gordon Brown, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, is somewhat overshadowed by the gushing review of the achievements of the Clinton administration, which has combined "prudent macroeconomic policies together with an exceptionally dynamic private sector and a responsive labour market" to achieve "solid growth of output and employment with low inflation and a diminishing fiscal imbalance".

The massive engine of the United States economy is helping to power the world economy, which is projected to grow by 4 per cent this year and 4.5 per cent next year, and the IMF believes this impressive level of growth can be sustained into the next decade. These levels of growth compare with the average 3.75 per cent rate of expansion since 1970.

Japan and the continental European countries are proving to be a disappointment, leading to a reduction in growth forecasts by the IMF. Japan's economy is now only expected to expand by 1.1 per cent this year and 2.1 per cent in 1998. This is a virtual halving of estimates and reflects unexpectedly weak domestic demand and the knock-on effect of the financial crisis in South-east Asia which has reduced demand for Japanese goods.

The IMF argues that Britain and the United States are creating more jobs and reducing unemployment by having taken tough measures to create a flexible labour force. In practice this means the loss of job security, the removal of demarcation lines and less state protection against redundancy.

According to the IMF the pressure against reform comes from "insiders" who have jobs and are effectively blocking those who do not from gaining employment. It dismisses innovations such as work sharing and early retirement as either exacerbating or masking the fundamental problems.

The report says that 8 to 9 per cent of the labour force in continental Europe's three largest countries suffer from structural unemployment, which is 3 to 3.5 percentage points more than might be attributed to normal mismatches in the labour market. The root cause, says the IMF, is "elaborate job and income protection arrangements that raise the cost of labour and discourage job creation".

The IMF forecasts were issued ahead of the World Bank/IMF meetings which are likely to be overshadowed by the financial crisis among the neighbours of Hong Kong where the meetings are being held.

Michael Mussa, head of the IMF's research department, stressed that despite these problems, Asia, led by a strong performance from China, was likely to continue registering the world's highest economic growth levels even though the South-east Asian countries would see their rates of growth halved in the next two years.

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THE WORLD OUTLOOK

	Output projections (annual % change)		Differences from May 1997 Projections	
	1997	1998	1997	1998
World Output	4.2	4.3	-0.1	-0.2
Advanced economies	3.0	2.9	0.1	-0.0
Major industrial countries	2.8	2.5	0.2	-0.1
United States	3.7	2.6	0.7	0.4
Japan	1.1	2.1	-1.1	-0.9
Germany	2.3	2.8	0.0	-0.2
France	2.2	2.8	-0.2	-0.2
Italy	1.2	2.1	0.2	-0.3
United Kingdom	3.3	2.6	-0.0	-0.2
Canada	3.7	3.5	0.3	0.1
Other advanced economies	3.9	4.2	0.1	0.1

Hot weather cools profits at Next

Next, the high-flying retailer, surprised the stock market yesterday with figures showing a weak August due to the hot weather, higher returns from its summer sale and the half-day closure for Princess Diana's funeral.

However the group said that though the figures forced profits downgrades and were out of line with strong official retail statistics for the month, it believes it has not lost its touch.

Next's announcement that sales in the six weeks since the end of July were just 10 per cent ahead of the same period last year on 8 per cent more space forced the shares down by around 40p in early trading. However, the stock recovered to post a 7p gain to 735.5p.

"We don't believe the Next bubble is going to burst on the basis of six weeks' figures," said chairman Lord Wolfson. Lord Wolfson said mourning for the death of Diana, Princess of Wales, cost the group around £3m of sales in August. But the greatest impact was the hot weather, which encouraged shoppers to sunbathe instead, and a high level of returns from the Next summer sale.

The current trading statement overshadowed Next's half-year figures which showed that pre-exceptional profits rose from £56m to £67.3m. The stores reported a 20 per cent increase in profits to £36m. Next Directory, the mail order catalogue, also did well with profits up from £11.8m to £15.8m.

Midlands Elec pull plug on c

Midlands Electricity yesterday joined the list of utilities that had to abandon expensive computerising systems, reports on the cables.





OUTLOOK

FINANCIAL JOURNAL OF THE YEAR

While it is true that the two methods co-exist perfectly happily both in London and Chicago, that is only because screen trading is so obviously only a little-used back-up to the action in the pit. The two cultures will not merge easily without one subsum-

Britain is IMF's blue-eyed boy

It is always nice to be patted on the back for economic achievement, so those British newspapers that chose to break the embargo on the IMF's world economic report yesterday can hardly be blamed for

It is hardly surprising, therefore, that the IMF should see in Britain the blue-eyed boy of Europe. With its deregulated labour and capital markets, Britain is the country that most closely accords in Europe with the American model. By contrast, other previously much more successful economies seem stuck in a bygone age. Modernise or die, the IMF shouts, Tony Blair-like, and though most of the rest of Europe still rather regards America's attempts to sell its ways as tantamount to the export of toxic waste, it gets an increasingly receptive hearing. Everyone believes in flexible labour markets, fiscal responsibility and free capital markets now, even if they don't practice any of these things.

Britannic bonanza raises questions

Traditionally, these have been used to pay policyholders' bonuses. But in the case of insurance companies that are not mutually owned, the fashion increasingly is to allocate ownership of these orphan assets to shareholders rather than policyholders. And what's wrong with that given that it is shareholders' capital which has contributed to the success of the life fund?

In some cases it is more complicated than this, because, as with L&G and Britannic argues, itself, the surplus identified has come not just from better investment returns from with-profits business, but also from shareholders' capital in the life fund. Britannic says the money comes from business written before the with-profit fund was set up. Even so, the argument still applies: if shareholders are going to grab a slice of the cake where does that leave the legitimate interests of policyholders? The orphan asset issue seems as good a reason as any for shoring up a mutual every time.

Work began installing the IBM system at Midlands' Birmingham headquarters five years ago and at one point 160 contractors were working on the project. But the system, costing tens of millions of pounds, was abandoned last week after Midlands decided that it would not be ready in time for the deregulation of the electricity market next April when 22 million households. Including its 2 million domestic customers, will be able to start shopping around for suppliers.

She declined to say how much the system had cost to develop or how much Midlands would have to write off. But the company estimated in May that the cost of getting its computer systems ready for the deregulated market would be £67.45m. This compares with the £24.67m that Offer says it

An IBM spokesman told the magazine *Utility Week* that Midlands had abandoned the sys-

Cellnet, the mobile telephone operator also lost £40m on a customer billing system.

Kingfisher's chief executive, Sir Geoff Mulcahy, said the group had re-established its pattern of sustained growth which was derailed by a shock prof-

Sir Geoff said: "We are seeing improved consumer confidence but people are still pretty cautious about what they spend. It is not an Eighties-style boom."

Sir Geoff said Kingfisher was looking for additional sites for its Woolworths and Comet chains. Though Kingfisher backed away from buying the whole of Littlewoods' high street stores because it felt the price was too high, Sir Geoff said he was still interested in picking up additional high

B&Q was the star performer with profits up from £47m to £72.2m in the half. B&Q increased its market share from 17 to 18 per cent over the year. Woolworths, whose profit almost doubled to £10m, is testing a Football World section in one branch. It sells replica football kits but has had problems securing adequate supplies. Comet also did well, turning round a £3m loss in the equivalent period last year to a £2.6m profit.

Merrydown, the cider-maker that owns the second best-selling alcopop, Two Dogs, admitted yesterday that its own sales had been hit by the decision of pubs such as JD Wetherspoon to stop stocking

The group has also been forced to write down the value of its bingo assets after a poor trading performance from the division which has been hit by the effects of the National Lottery.

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THE INVESTMENT COLUMN

EDITED BY MAGNUS GRIMOND

Buy-backs brighten BG prospects

The 250,000 Sids who sold their British Gas shares after this year's demerger may well have breathed a sigh of relief yesterday. BG, the successor pipeline and exploration business, announced it was slashing its dividend by more than a third. The cut in the interim from 6.4p to 4p will be followed by a similar reduction in the final payout, bringing total dividends for 1997 down to just 8p, compared with 14.5p under the old regime.

Shocks are always best absorbed with a little good news thrown in and BG surprised no one yesterday by revealing plans for a £1.3bn share buy-back, worth 30p a share. The complex capital restructuring which comes with the buy-back, a path already trodden by Southern Electric and Yorkshire Water, means all shareholders from Sid to the City will benefit equally.

So after a turbulent long-term prospect, improved income? The short answer is yes, with the caveat that the one-off cut in the dividend - forced on by the big reduction in pipeline prices recommended by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission - means the shares will never be quite the same yield stock they were in the old British Gas days.

For a start, the rebased dividend should be inflation-proof, given that the new five-year pipeline price formula to be agreed with the regulator is index-linked. On top of that, the substantial turnaround in BG's exploration and production business, now running in the black, could mean further upside for the dividend. Better still, there remains the long-term

deriving profits are still up a handy 21 per cent to £29.7m.

General Cable was a piece of conglomeratisation in the best possible sense of the word, with margins jumping from next to nothing to around 9 per cent during the three years of Wassall's ownership. The group followed up the sale with a £150m cash hand-back to shareholders.

It is hard to see what else it can do to satisfy the City, yet Wassall's shares have underperformed the FTSE All-Share index by close to 30 per cent since the General Cable purchase. Now the market is fretting over how the group will spend its acquisition firepower, put at around £500m.

The Far East, where Wassall has a Singapore quote through its York trailer axle business, must be a candidate for expansion and eventual flotation, once a locally recruited chief executive is in place.

Dilution caused by the cash could see profits slip from £55m this year to £46m next, putting the shares, up 3.5p at 327p, on a forward multiple of 17. Hold for further action.

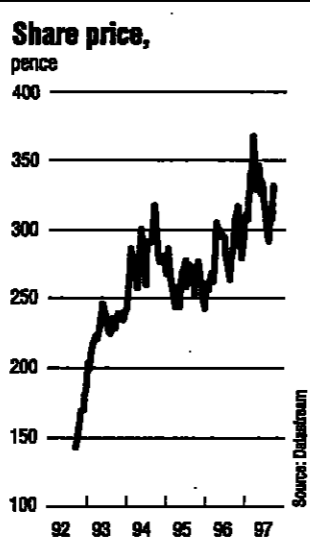
Sentiment the key to Gallaher

Tobacco share prices have little to do with profits these days. Sentiment is the key. Shares in Gallaher, demerged from American Brands and floated at 283p in June, have underperformed the market by 16 per cent since then. Part of the reason is a lack of liquidity in the shares - some 75 per cent are still

Wassall: At a glance

Market value: £501m, share price 327.5p (+3.5p)

Trading record	94	95	96	96	97
Turnover (£m)	58.3	12.09	13.8	14.7	17.0
Pre-tax profits (£m)	551.0	675.0	750.0	335	381
Earnings per share (p)	18.9	22.2	25.0	10.1	11.9
Dividends per share (p)	8.6	9.6	10.35	3.25	3.55



possibility of further buy-backs. Prudence will dictate a waiting game, but the group's strong cash flow could yield more pleasant surprises. Meanwhile any Sids who still hold Centrica shares, the demerged gas supply business, could also see buy-backs later next year. The improving outlook should bring profits at BG to £782m for 1997. Despite the recent price rises, the shares, down 10p at 258.5p, still look attractive on a forward yield of 3.9 per cent.

Wassall battles to please City

Wassall is doing its best to learn from the disastrous recent performance of other conglomerates, such as Hanson and BTR.

This year it raised £462m from the flotation of 100 per cent of General Cable, the US copper wire operation it bought in 1994. Some £199m of the resulting £277m gain is reflected in the latest half-year results, which explains the huge jump in half-year profits. But un-

held by US investors who see Gallaher as low risk.

But yesterday's strong maiden interim added only 4p to the share price, which closed at 273p. The growing threat of litigation in the UK, where Gallaher and Imperial Tobacco have around 80 per cent of the market, remains a negative. So, too, are Labour's manifesto pledges to ban tobacco advertising and cut sports sponsorship.

In reality, none of these poses a serious threat to Gallaher. The group's Benson & Hedges and Silk Cut brands have some of the best instant recognition rates and would survive without advertising.

The group is also striking more international sponsorship deals and pushing international expansion hard, particularly in eastern Europe and the Far East.

On SBC Warburg profit forecasts, Gallaher on 8.7 times 1997 pro forma earnings looks cheap next to Imperial on 9.3 times. However, with the US situation still uncertain and the likelihood of group legal action in the UK, sentiment is likely to remain negative for the next few months.

Savoy group to expand overseas



The Savoy: The group is looking for underperforming hotels overseas with similar characteristics to its London flagship

The Savoy Hotel group, revitalised by managing director Ramon Pajares, is planning to move back overseas just two years after selling the prestigious Lancaster Hotel in Paris, reports Magnus Grimond.

In an important departure for the 108-year-old group, Mr Pajares said yesterday he saw "tremendous opportunities" to expand the group into half a dozen or more of the "right" international destinations, including

Paris, New York, Rome, Milan, Madrid and Hong Kong.

Although the group owned the Lancaster until 1994, it has not previously had a significant presence overseas. Mr Pajares said it would seek underperforming hotels with similar characteristics to the Savoy. In return for underwriting the costs of refurbishment, the group would pick up an equity stake and take on the management contract.

Although there would be no plans to change the local name of the hotels, the group would benefit from the Savoy brand name, Mr Pajares suggested. "With the value of the brand name, a brand which we cannot put in the bal-

ance sheet, and given that technology will make brands even more important, this is a tremendous opportunity we have to develop."

The international chain, to be built up over five or six years, would allow overheads to be spread, better utilise the Savoy's international marketing effort and give the opportunity to create a central reservations system. Given the increasing opportunity afforded by technology for guests to make their own bookings, a familiar international brand name like the Savoy would become increasingly valuable, he suggested.

The news came as the Savoy group, currently including the Savoy Hotel,

The Berkeley, Claridge's and The Connaught, reported an 84 per cent jump in pre-tax profits to £7.71m in the six months to June. The figures reflected the benefits of a £72m refurbishment programme, principally at Claridge's and The Savoy, which helped the four London hotels raise their occupancy rates to 86.4 per cent. Average room rates rose a further 5 per cent in the first half, after an 18 per cent increase last year.

Graham, which has said it wants to dispose of its 68 per cent stake in the group inherited from last year's Forte takeover, has told Mr Pajares it is "not in a hurry" to sell the shares in the light of the improving performance.

Trinity rides regional newspaper upswing

The City has warmed to regional newspaper groups and yesterday's first-half results from Trinity International Holdings, the UK's biggest regional newspaper publisher, should have helped this confidence. But, as Cathy Newman reports, there are fears the advertising boom has peaked.

Trinity, which owns titles such as the *Liverpool Echo* and the *Chester Chronicle*, beat analysts' expectations to turn in a 34 per cent increase in pre-tax profits to £32m for the six months to the end of June.

Philip Graf, chief executive, said lower newspaper prices and strong advertising revenues had helped. But he added a note of caution about future advertising growth. "This year we've grown 10 per cent in advertising in the first half," he said. "I don't see that continuing next year." Mr Graf said he anticipated 4 per cent growth in 1998.

His comments, and City analysts' feelings that the advertising cycle may have peaked, sent the shares 2 per cent lower to close at 492p.

Mr Graf, who engineered the £328m

purchase of Thomson Regional Newspapers two years ago, said he remained ambitious about acquisitions. "I would hope we have the track record to do another Thomson-style acquisition if the opportunity arose," he added.

Analysts said Trinity could be interested in United Provincial Newspapers (UPN), the regional newspaper division of United News & Media.

Newsquest Media Group, which comes to the market later this year, said earlier this week it would look at UPN if it came up for sale.

Trinity said it had reinvested some of the costs saved on newsprint back into the business to improve the editorial product. The group has been experimenting with cutting the cover-prices in Belfast and south Wales to boost circulation. Mr Graf said that although weekly newspaper circulations were "on a par with or ahead of last year", daily circulation was "not as good as we would have wished".

He added that a strategic review of the group's American business would be complete by the end of the year. Analysts have been concerned about the future direction of the division, and some have hoped Trinity would focus on the UK. The company sold its Canadian newspapers at the beginning of the year.

Orphan assets boost Britannic Assurance

Britannic Assurance shares jumped 93p to 939p yesterday after the insurance group unveiled plans to use £1bn of "orphan assets" to boost dividends by 20 per cent a year for three to four years. The move follows Government agreement earlier this year that shareholders were the rightful owners of the assets, built up over the last 50 years. In its first half-year results since gaining approval for the distribution, Britannic announced a doubling of its interim dividend to 10p net per share and forecast a full-year dividend of 20p net up to 33.6p per share. Britannic said it would put £75m, or 7.5 per cent of current assets, into shareholders' funds each year as a smoothed investment return, which helped spur a 211 per cent increase in profits to £80.1m. Outlook, page 25

Laing sees homes recovery

John Laing, the contractor and house-building group, yesterday joined the chorus of builders forecasting a sustained recovery in the housing market. Robert Wood, deputy chairman, said higher interest rates were unlikely to hit the market until 1999 and, despite possible signs of overheating in central London prices, they were not seeing a boom. "I think the market is sustainable", he said. Laing reported a 41 per cent leap in group pre-tax profits to £12.4m for the six months to June, fuelled by the homes side, where profits mushroomed from £2m to £6.6m. Profits from the construction business rose from £500,000 to £1.7m, with work on hand up from £1.07bn to £1.14bn.

Mortgage lending slows

Mortgage lending slowed to a year-on-year rate of 8 per cent in August, down from 12 per cent in July, suggesting the market is entering a more stable period, according to Barclays. Latest figures from the bank, whose Barclays Mortgage Index covers all mortgage lenders, showed mortgage advances of £7.4bn in August, down 7 per cent from the August figure of £7.9bn, the first fall since February.

£1.4bn Rolls-Royce order

Rolls-Royce's Allison engines division could reap over \$1.4bn in sales after Embraer, the Brazilian aircraft maker, yesterday selected Allison AE3007A3 turbo-fans to power a new 37-seat regional jet. The UK jet-engine maker forecast that Embraer would sell 500 of its new EMB-135 aircraft over the next 10 years. Embraer said it would spend \$100m to develop the EMB-135.

Forex traders' VAT hopes rise

Foreign exchange traders could be in line for a windfall of up to £100m if a preliminary ruling on value-added tax is backed by the European Court of Justice, according to accountants KPMG. The Advocate General, whose opinions are usually confirmed by the court, has said in a case brought by First National Bank of Chicago that VAT associated with transactions with non-European Union parties can be recovered.

COMPANY RESULTS

	Turnover £	Pre-tax £	EPS	Dividend
British Airways (Q)	280m (27.1m)	40.2m (42.5m)	12.41p (12.28p)	2.40p (2.21p)
British Airways (H)	1.1m (28.8m)	30.4m (32.9m)	10.0p (9.8p)	10.0p (9.8p)
Charmant Bermonds (Q)	240m (27.1m)	0.97 (2.07m)	1.1p (3.3p)	2.0p
Claridge's (Q)	2.8m (2.5m)	157.5m (108.8m)	17.1p (11.7p)	6.5p (5.0p)
John Laing (Q)	694.1m (574.0m)	12.4m (8.8m)	5.0p (6.5p)	3.5p (3.0p)
Laing (H)	185.5m (172.3m)	6.7m (10.4m)	3.45p (5.78p)	1.8p (1.7p)
Matthews (Q)	24.5m (25.1m)	2.43m (2.85m)	7.4p (8.8p)	2.5p (2.5p)
Matthews (H)	29.4m (28.4m)	5.04m (4.81m)	7.3p (6.7p)	3.0p (3.0p)
Next (Q)	520.5m (405.4m)	71.2m (56.0m)	13.9p (10.9p)	6.0p (5.0p)
Next (H)	40.8m (34.4m)	755.000 (1.01m)	2.12p (2.22p)	1.3p (1.3p)
Orion Software (Q)	13.4m (11.8m)	180.000 (1.12m)	1.4p (1.6p)	nil
Orion Software (H)	44.4m (41.1m)	7.712m (4.18m)	11.3p (19.2p)	nil
Rolls-Royce (Q)	28.3m (28.3m)	3.8m (3.0m)	24.18p (18.95p)	4.5p (4.5p)
Rolls-Royce (H)	159.7m (155.5m)	39.0m (23.8m)	18.1p (17.1p)	4.0p (3.5p)
Savoy Hotel (Q)	72.5m (74.2m)	757.000 (801.000)	0.52p (0.52p)	nil
Savoy Hotel (H)	21.8m (21.8m)	2.15m (2.02m)	19.7p (18.1p)	11.0p (11.0p)
Wassall (Q)	382.7m (468.8m)	291.5m (22.4m)	106.7p (8.8p)	3.45p (3.21p)
Wassall (H)	100.0m (105.3m)	12.4m (9.6m)	11.9p (8.3p)	2.75p (2.75p)

(Q) - First (H) - Interim * - Pre-tax profit before exceptional

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Technicians test rules to the limit as elite prepare for hard-fought Whitbread Race



GRANT DALTON

The skipper of Merit Cup in the Whitbread Round-the-World Race, which starts on Sunday, expects the hardest contest of his career. He will be writing regularly for *The Independent* about his experiences as the race unfolds.

With just a few days to go to the start of what everyone agrees is going to be the toughest and closest Whitbread Race ever, we have all been called to a fireside chat to say that, if there are problems, they should be dealt with internally, not hung out for inspection in the press.

Which is right, and so far the organisation of this race has operated really well. But the other side of that coin is that the management has to be really strong, to deal with issues quickly and decisively, because if they do not sort things out they will inevitably blow up in public and the race management itself could find itself the target.

This Whitbread is more than ever like an America's Cup, given the intensity of the research and testing, and the calibre of people in-

involved. The eyes of the world will be on us for the next nine months.

They will see a hard race, a very close race, and anyone who thinks he will blitz the others is kidding himself. But, as in any sport where hi-tech equipment is involved in producing better performance, there are issues behind the scenes.

Two things have been concerning us, both technical, but both could have a bearing on the race. The main area which has everyone looking over their shoulders is the sails. Just like all the bits of a racing car, these have to comply with complex measurement rules as they provide both the power and the gearbox for our racing machines.

All sorts of clever thinking has been at work to push the rules to the limit, work which has been car-

ried out in the utmost secrecy. So people will present designs of sails to the scrutineers as late as possible. If there is any doubt, the measurers will have to be very tough.

Even the long sausage bags in which the sails are folded need careful attention. The rules say they must be porous, so they let out any water in the bag. The reason is that, if they are not porous, the water will stay within the bag and, when those bags are stored on deck, the extra weight of the water will give added balance to the boat. I have seen a few bags that are not porous, just one more area where the competitors will want to see a strong response. The organisers cannot afford to try to be Mr Nice Guy.

Almost a contradiction is that you also want to keep the weight

down. We have lost several valuable days of testing because we had to make sure that the boat weighed in right on the 13,500kg minimum. But we found that the load cell being used on the crane to weigh the boats was giving different readings on different days, plus or minus 80kg.

That may not seem much, but the computer also tells us that to push an extra 80kg round the course could cost over two hours. The race may be won and lost by less than that and, to put it further in perspective, we spent many thousands of dollars testing keel shapes, deciding that one may save us an hour round the course compared to another, and comparing minute differences in the hull size which at best would give us two hours.

I know, the bookmakers are

making us second or third favourites, but the result is difficult to call. We came back from winning our class in the Fastnet Race knowing that, even if we had an edge, we had a lot of work to do to improve the performance of the boat.

We think we have improved, but we also know that others have improved proportionately with us, with Lawrie Smith's Silk Cut, Paul Cayard's EF and Gunnar Krantz's Swedish Match really motoring. I still think any one of at least five could win this race, and that is without the unknown quantity of Ross Field's America's Challenge.

The Alan Andrews design is one of only two not put together by the US-based Kiwi, Bruce Farr, and it is very different. It's either going to be a hell of a long race around the

world for them, or a hell of a long race for the rest of us.

Another factor will be the ability to keep developing the boats over the nine legs. In the old days, we would not have dared to risk the sort of last-minute changes we are prepared to try this time. It shows how professional the Merit Cup crew is that we have been able to do it.

They are ready, I have confidence in them and the boat, the waiting is nearly over, but I have no illusions. The first leg to Cape Town is likely to be the hardest, not just because it's the longest but because by the time we cross the equator we will know who has done his homework best. Even then I think it will be so tight that protecting any lead will be the most nerve-wracking I have encountered.



Deer at the Forest of Arden Golf Course were coaxed back into the adjoining Packington Park in readiness for the One2One British Masters

Photograph: Keith Dobney

Olazabal clears the air as Ryder Cup countdown begins

Jose Maria Olazabal, who plays in the British Masters starting today, has made up with the man he replaces in next week's Ryder Cup. Andy Farrell reports

It's good to talk may not be the catchphrase of the telephone company sponsoring the One2One British Masters, but Jose Maria Olazabal agrees.

Olazabal, one of eight European Ryder Cup players here at the Forest of Arden to warm up for next week's match at Valderrama, has cleared the air with Miguel Angel Martin, whose automatic qualifying place was handed to his countryman when he failed to report for a fitness test on his injured wrist.

"We have talked a few times by phone," Olazabal said. "I feel sorry for him because I know how tough it is not to be

able to play. I don't want to comment on the decision, but the situation between us is clear. There are no hard feelings."

The Spaniard withdrew from the 1995 Ryder Cup with a foot injury which kept him out of the game for 18 months. "I missed it badly," he recalled. "It was tough to see it on TV when you wanted to be there. But I knew I had made the right decision. I could not cope with 36 holes a day and I was glad when

the boys won the Cup for Europe."

Another who declined to play in the Ryder Cup, Sandy Lyle in 1989, is making a rare European appearance. "I never regretted making the decision to pull out," the Scot said. "I was playing so badly at the time and playing for a team makes it harder."

Olazabal has been practising for 27 holes a day and is confident he can play twice a day, if required. He is looking for

"four solid rounds" prior to Valderrama, but Colin Montgomerie, the leader of the European money list, said: "The Ryder Cup is next week's problem. My first priority is to try and win here."

This tournament has been moved from Collingtree Park, near Northampton, after the dire state of the greens there a year ago. But though advance reports of the greens at the Forest of Arden were not at all encouraging, they have im-

proved greatly over the last two weeks.

Six Ryder Cup players, including Ian Woosnam, Colin Montgomerie and the Americans Brad Faxon and Phil Mickelson, line up in next month's Toyota World Match Play at Wentworth, where Ernie Els will defend the title for the third time. But the event is lacking three of the four major winners, Tiger Woods, Justin Leonard and Davis Love, plus Greg Norman and Nick Faldo.

Woodward warning for De Glanville

Clive Woodward, England's first full-time rugby union coach, wants to build his Test side from scratch and that could signal the end of the road for Phil de Glanville as captain. Chris Hewett reports on the new regime's first day in charge

It seemed an innocent enough statement, but it was pregnant with implication. Clive Woodward launched his reign as the England team's big white chief at Bisham Abbey yesterday by insisting that he would start the job with a "blank sheet of paper", adding that he was in no particular hurry to appoint a captain for the autumn internationals against New Zealand, South Africa and Australia.

That much was in keeping with the times: after all, the Rugby Football Union had been in no particular hurry to appoint Woodward. But the new coach's remark carried with it a subtext of considerable import. By declining to confirm Phil de Glanville in his current post of captain and naming no fewer than five candidates, each armed with strong leadership credentials, Woodward tacitly admitted that the honour was up for grabs.

"The captain will have to earn his place in the team, be in there on merit," he said. "We happen to be very strong in this area - we have Phil, who did an outstanding job last season, but also Lawrence Dallaglio, Martin Johnson, Jason Leonard and Tim Rodber. There's no mad panic. The first task is to pare down the squad of 77 into something more manageable."

Woodward cut an unruffled figure as he cheerfully discussed the demands of the forthcoming four-handers with the southern hemisphere superpowers and dealt cleverly with the verbal darts thrown yesterday by Geoff Cooke, one of his predecessors in the Twickenham hot seat. Cooke had described the 41-year-old former Lions centre as "volatile" and questioned his coaching background. "I'm looking forward to meeting him," said Woodward. "He'll have ample opportunity to tell me front-on where I'm going wrong."

John Mitchell, the former Gloucester and All Black captain who proved so effective in coaching Sale last season, was confirmed as Woodward's assistant. He will work primarily with the forwards and his hard edge should prove invaluable. "I've been on the phone to New Zealand, just to make

sure I'm not being excommunicated," said the quietly authoritative Kiwi, who will continue to work through his five-year club contract. "The people back home have been very positive, actually."

"Obviously, it will be a very difficult situation when I'm involved in an England-New Zealand Test but at the end of the day I'm a professional. Funny enough, the All Black management want to use the facilities at Sale while they're on tour here. We'll have to get someone down to the ground with a video."

As expected, Richard Hill of Gloucester will continue as England A coach with Andrew Harriman, a World Cup Sevens-winning captain in 1993, as manager. A second coach, almost certainly Rob Smith of Wasps, will be confirmed as soon as contractual negotiations are complete.

Bloom time for daffodil county

Glamorgan are set to win cricket's county crown for the first time in nearly 30 years. Alan Wilkins, who played for the club from 1975 to 1980, reveals how also-rans have been transformed into champions-elect.

Take away a Sunday League title success and it's 20 years since Glamorgan last had a major trophy to shout about.

The Gillette Cup final of 1977 against Middlesex is the match that many remember for the astonishing six hit by Mike Llewellyn off John Emburey over the Lord's pavilion. The memories for me, however, take in the changing times of those past two decades, from the evening before that one-day final when a committee man had appropriated my hotel room, to the class of '97 who strutted the motorways in a fleet of Mercedes Benz sponsored cars and are now poised to bring the Championship back to Wales for the first time in 28 years.

It has taken Glamorgan all that time to lose their Cinderella tag and become one of the most professional outfits on and off the field. Apart from the two one-day triumphs, loyal Welsh cricket supporters have endured a sea of mediocrity when the Glamorgan ship, season after season, has drifted between currents of failure and frustration.

Attempts by the club's administration to steer towards respectability have produced some spectacular blunders, but the lessons have been learned. It will be by design, not chance, if Glamorgan win this season's County Championship to add to their triumphs of 1948 and 1969.

Glamorgan cricket has long lived in the shadow of Welsh rugby but guided, forever it seems, by the late Wilfred Wooller. For half a century Wilf Wooller was one of the greatest and most colourful figures in Welsh sport. He captained Glamorgan for 14 years, taking the club to its first Championship title. No one was more proud of the Glamorgan daffodil on his chest than the "Skipper" who went on to become the club's secretary and president before he died at the age of 84 in March this year.

The present captain, Matthew Maynard, used to spend hours talking cricket

with Wooller. It is no surprise, therefore, that the same dashing leadership has been passed on. Maynard should have had more Test opportunities, but, for him, leading Glamorgan to its third Championship title carries more personal weight.

Not only would it be a personal triumph for Maynard, but the club's coaching personnel would look back with a sense of achievement in someone who was taken on to the staff at the age of 18 and proceeded to score a breathtaking century in his first Championship match.

Maynard's success story contrasts vividly with some other signings. Too many ageing players in the 70s and 80s managed to find a place in the Glamorgan convalescent home.

The club's nursery required a complete overhaul and it began with Tom Cartwright, signed from Somerset in 1977, who gradually took up the coaching reins and is now the national coach for Wales. Peter Walker, the director of cricket for the Cricket Board of Wales, has been another major influence.

A coaching structure which has nurtured the likes of Robert Croft, Steve James, Adrian Dale, Hugu Morris, Tony Cottey, Steve Watkin and Darren Thomas is backed by a sound commercial and financial operation. James has scored seven Championship hundreds this season, while Watkin has again been a model of durability and reliability.

There is, however, another important factor which has been a barometer of consistency throughout the club's existence and that is the stoical support of the Welsh public - those hardy folk who have given their time, their money, their sympathy, and their backing over so many barren years. Following the 1993 Sunday League title win the club's membership climbed to a record 13,500. That figure is now just over 11,000, but membership funds have increased.

Those fans have appreciated some great overseas players, in particular Vivian Richards, who inspired the '93 team, and now Waqar Younis, revered by Welsh youngsters countywide.

Moments of triumph for Glamorgan cricket have been too few. To a man this side feels that the time has arrived. Not since Tony Lewis led Glamorgan to its second Championship title has everything been more in place for a third, and a patient public will be there to acclaim it.

Headley and McCague out

Kent will be without their two leading fast bowlers going into the final round of the County Championship today against Surrey at Canterbury. Dean Headley and Martin McCague are both out with back problems.

However, Kent, who trail the Championship leaders Glamorgan by a point in second place, have been encouraged in their chase for the title by Surrey's list of injured bowlers.

Chris Lewis, who has made progress after a hip injury, faces a fitness test but, if he fails, Ben Hollands and Joey Benjamin will share the new ball.

Top of the table

	P	W	L	D	Net
Glamorgan	24	12	7	5	229
Surrey	23	11	7	5	228
Warwickshire	23	11	8	3	212
Worcestershire	23	11	7	3	212
Nottinghamshire	23	11	7	3	208

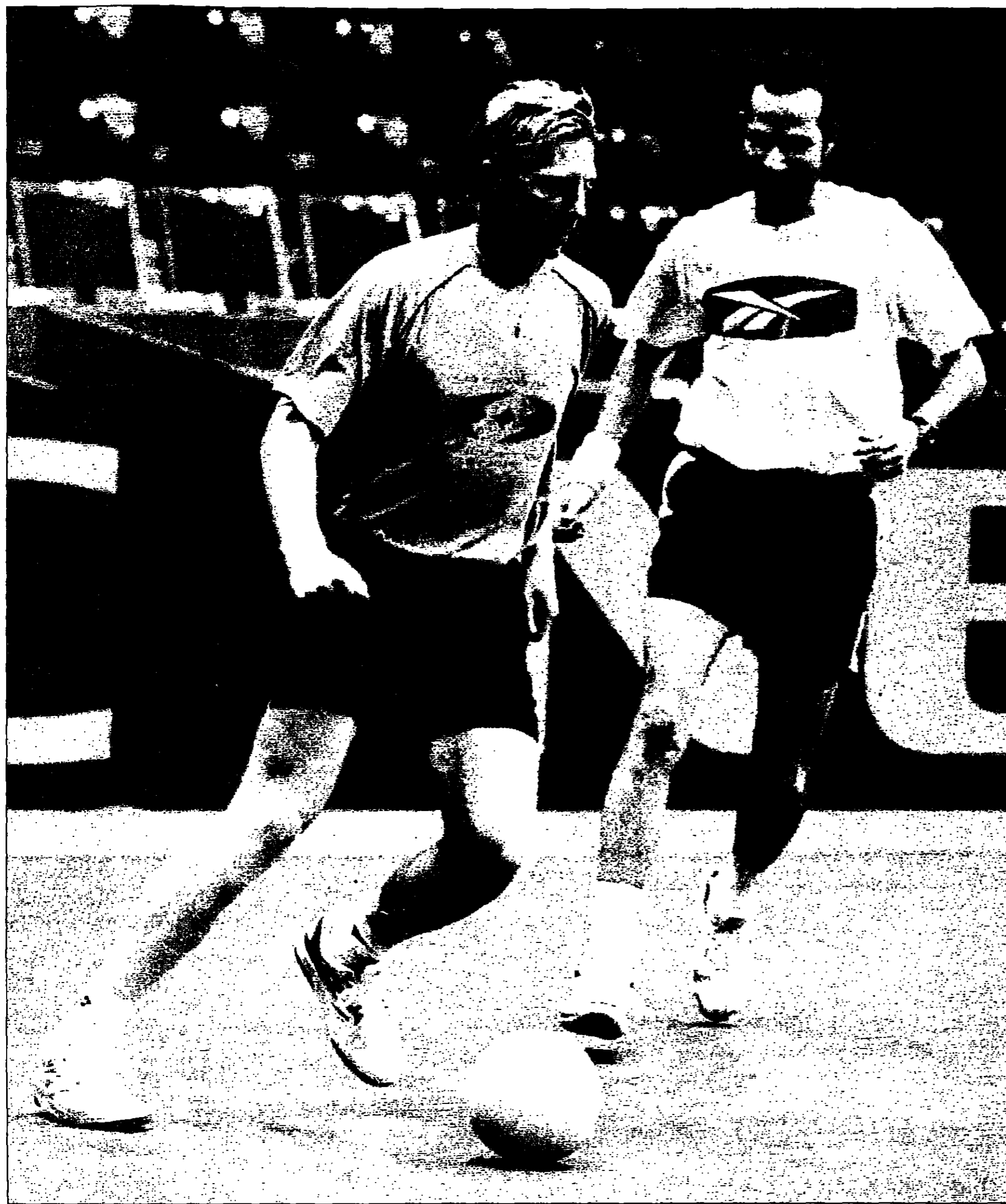
By contrast to Surrey and Kent, Glamorgan are at full strength against Somerset at Taunton and relishing the opportunity of winning their first title since 1969.

"It's a help psychologically to know it is in our hands. I would prefer to be in this position than to have to try and catch up," Matthew Maynard, the Glamorgan captain, said.

Z-O-L-A

Chelsea vs Slovan Bratislava
live from 7:30 tonight.

5



New ball games: Boris Becker practises ball control against his team-mate Alex Radulescu in Essen yesterday as Germany prepare for a Davis Cup tie against Mexico

Aggrieved Brive told to meet commitments

The unhappy rugby players of Brive, still licking wounds resulting from brawls with Pontypridd on and off the pitch, were yesterday ordered to play their Heineken Cup match at Bath this weekend.

Chris Hewitt reports

The reigning European champions may not feel like playing, but play they must. Their attempt to force a postponement of Saturday's Pool C confrontation at the Recreation Ground had received short shrift from annoyed Bath officials and, when the directors of European Rugby Cup Ltd met in emergency session in Dublin yesterday, they took a similar line.

Brive had cited injuries sustained by three of their international players - Philippe Carbonneau, Christophe Lamaison and David Venditti - claiming each had been hurt during the now infamous bar-room brawl with their Welsh visitors on Sunday night. The argument cut no ice whatsoever, and much to Bath's relief, the sell-out fixture was declared on after the briefest of discussions.

The longer-term issues arising from the weekend excesses were proving rather more taxing, however. With Brive threatening to pull out of the return fixture with Pontypridd, scheduled to take place at Sardis Road on Saturday week, the board members found themselves between a rock and a hard place as they endeavoured to find a course of action that would both satisfy calls for tough sanctions and keep the tournament on an even keel.

Officials of both miscreant clubs were giving their sides of the sorry story to board members, while Eddie Jones, the Ponty manager, held out an olive branch to Brive by assuring them of a genuine welcome in 10 days' time. "There will be no animosity," he said. "We will be looking for a fair and good match."

What happened during last weekend's match was unfortunate, as was the subsequent fracas. It was a very rough game - the players need to look at themselves to see what can be learned - and the bar mêlée

came about through the ill-feeling on the field.

Much-needed uplifting news for the world of rugby is that Jonah Lomu, the All Black wing who ran roughshod over everything in front of him at the 1995 World Cup, has finally been given the go-ahead to play again after a long absence due to illness.

John Mayhew, his team doctor, said yesterday that Lomu was now available for any level of the game and it was up to his provincial team, Counties-Manukau, to decide when they wanted him back in action.

Counties-Manukau officials confirmed that Lomu had been named as a reserve for a First Division match against Otago on Sunday and was likely to be used off the bench. They said he may also play for the B team the previous day.

Through his astounding feats at the last World Cup in South Africa, Lomu became rugby union's biggest attraction. He has not played this season because of a chronic kidney disorder for which he received intensive drug treatment. He was cleared to resume training in early August.

"He's in no danger of testing positive for any substance now," Dr Mayhew said. "He is about 117kg and looking fairly good at this stage. He can play rugby at any level that he wants to play, and it's up to him and his team advisers and selectors."

Lomu's clearance to play followed a medical examination on Tuesday. His manager, Phil Kingsley-Jones, said Lomu was excited at the prospect of returning. "He's like a little boy with a box of candies. It'll be absolutely marvellous to see him return," Kingsley-Jones said.

Good news for rugby fans here - if not for the players who will have to confront him - is that it now appears he will tour Britain with the All Blacks in November and December.

We may not, however, have the chance to watch Jason Little. He could miss Australia's internationals against England and Scotland in November as well as his country's tour of Argentina next month, so he can be fully fit for next season.

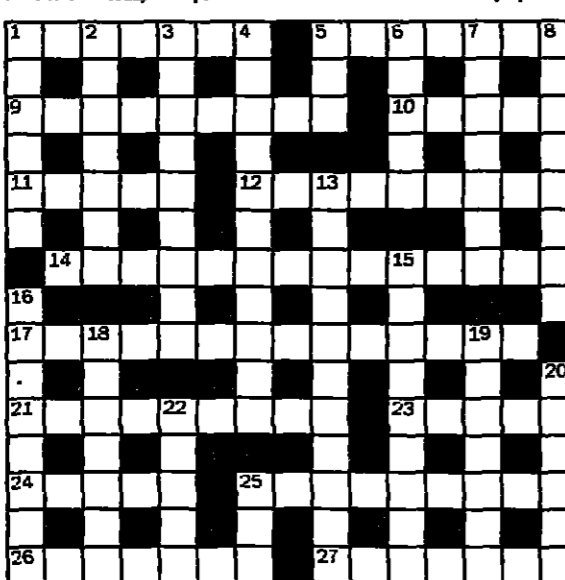
The experienced centre had surgery last week to remove a piece of floating cartilage in his right knee, which hampered him throughout last season. He has been advised not to run for the next two weeks.

THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD

No. 3407, Thursday 18 September

By Spivak

Wednesday's solution



- ACROSS**
- Mini apt to prove faulty - it's the drums (7)
 - Spidery crustacean on bottom of ocean (7)
 - Grave offence? (6,5)
 - Curry Latvian-style lacking the final touch? (5)
 - Page torn from directory (5)
 - Suit that'll do for royal yacht? (9)
 - As patients without infectious conditions are treated, taken altogether? (3,2,9)
 - Asocial cell is a funny way of describing a church (14)
 - One often needs special gear for driving (9)
 - China of Spanish origin? (5)
 - I love to have merry log in cold house (5)
 - Serial flattery works (4,5)
 - Just starting climb by end of afternoon? (7)
 - Bed canopies available on the perfume counter? (7)
 - Tone suggesting doctor's a prey to fatigue? (6)
 - Kid from the country (7)
 - To take a parallel example, one's initially bound by a leasing arrangement (9)
 - Death to the workers! (11)
 - Early end to corporal punishment in US jail (3)
 - Community leader respected by his brothers? (5)
 - Old bishop endlessly entranced by dance troupe (7)
 - Saturated fat (8)
 - Not aware old boy's being taken care of by a French maid? (11)
 - Artists involved in production of motion pictures? (9)
 - Allergic symptom produced by article found among rusting iron etc. (8)
 - Wine barrel, one Charles is holding on to (7)
 - Article about irritability starting to emerge in Texas community (7)
 - Murky ground negotiated by enlisted men in service (6)
 - Stopped feeling cold? (5)
 - Acted as MP for a day? (3)

FOOTBALL

Hateley's Hull look forward to trip to the Palace

Mark Hateley, the Hull City player-manager, urged his Third Division strugglers to savour their return leg with Crystal Palace after Tuesday's surprise 1-0 Coca-Cola Cup victory at Boothferry Park.

Duane Darby's goal midway through the first-half gave the Tigers a second-round first leg lead to take to Selhurst Park. Hull's biggest crowd of the season - just under 10,000 - celebrated at the final whistle as though they had already finished the job. Now Hateley wants his players to enjoy their second leg battle with Steve Coppell's Premiership outfit.

"We will go there and try and pass the ball," vowed Hateley. "What comes out of that we'll see but I'll tell them 'don't let it pass you by'."

The Huddersfield manager Brian Horton applauded his side after their 1-0 first leg win over West Ham at the McAlpine Stadium, and then admitted he wished his side could repeat their Coca-Cola Cup heroics in the league.

Town are rooted to the foot of the First Division table without a league win this season and Horton said: "I wish the Coca-Cola Cup was the league because we'd have seven points now."

Huddersfield take a slender advantage to the second leg at Upton Park thanks to a 75th-minute goal from Alex Dyer, who said: "There was no pressure on us because everyone ex-

pected us to lose, but we battled hard and it went well."

The West Ham manager, Harry Redknapp, said: "We're at home in the second leg and the tie is still pretty evenly balanced."

Blackpool, who knocked out Manchester City in the first round, take a 1-0 advantage to Coventry for the second round return leg thanks to David Linighan's 76th-minute goal at Bloomfield Road.

Barnsley staged a stunning fightback to beat last year's FA Cup semi-finalists Chesterfield 2-1. The Tykes equalised in the 87th minute via a Neil Redfearn penalty before Ashley Ward grabbed a winner deep into added time. Tony Lornor had given the Spireites a 58th-minute lead, also from the spot.

Reserve team striker Chris Freestone saved Middlesbrough's blushes at the Riverside by scoring the only goal against lowly Barnet from Robbie Mustoe's 56th-minute cross.

Mick Stockwell salvaged a draw for Ipswich Town with a last-gasp equaliser against the Third Division outfit Torquay at Portman Road.

The Third Division leaders Peterborough set themselves up for another giant-killing in the return leg by drawing 0-0 at First Division Reading.

Paulo Cesar Wanchope scored on his first appearance of the season to send Derby into their home leg against

Southern United with a useful 1-0 lead. Wolves' new signing Jesus Garcia Sanjuan marked his debut in English football with the only goal in the 1-0 away win at Fulham.

The West Bromwich manager Ray Harford returned to old club Luton and saw his striker Bob Taylor earn Albion a point with a 35th-minute effort to cancel out Stuart Douglas' 24th-minute opener.

Tranmere belied their dreadful league form by winning 2-0 at Notts County courtesy of Gary Jones and David Kelly.

Gareth Farrelly scored his first goal for Everton to give them a 1-0 victory at Scunthorpe while another Premiership side, Bolton, beat Leyton Orient 3-1 courtesy of goals from Andy Todd, Per Frandsen and John McGinlay.

Wimbledon slammed five past fellow-South Londoners Millwall, with Carl Cort scoring two to add to his first goal for the club against Newcastle on Saturday.

Peter Kennedy gave the Second Division leaders Watford a lifeline by conjuring a late equaliser against Sheffield United at Vicarage Road. Chris Waddle's Burnley woes continued as his side were beaten 4-0 by Stoke at home.

Sunderland's Michael Bridges celebrated his first start of the season by scoring the 56th-minute winner against Bury at the Stadium of Light.

Brewed beyond the call of duty.



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